Created on Amstrad keyboards for Amstrad users by Amstrad addicts

No.6 MARCH 1986 £1

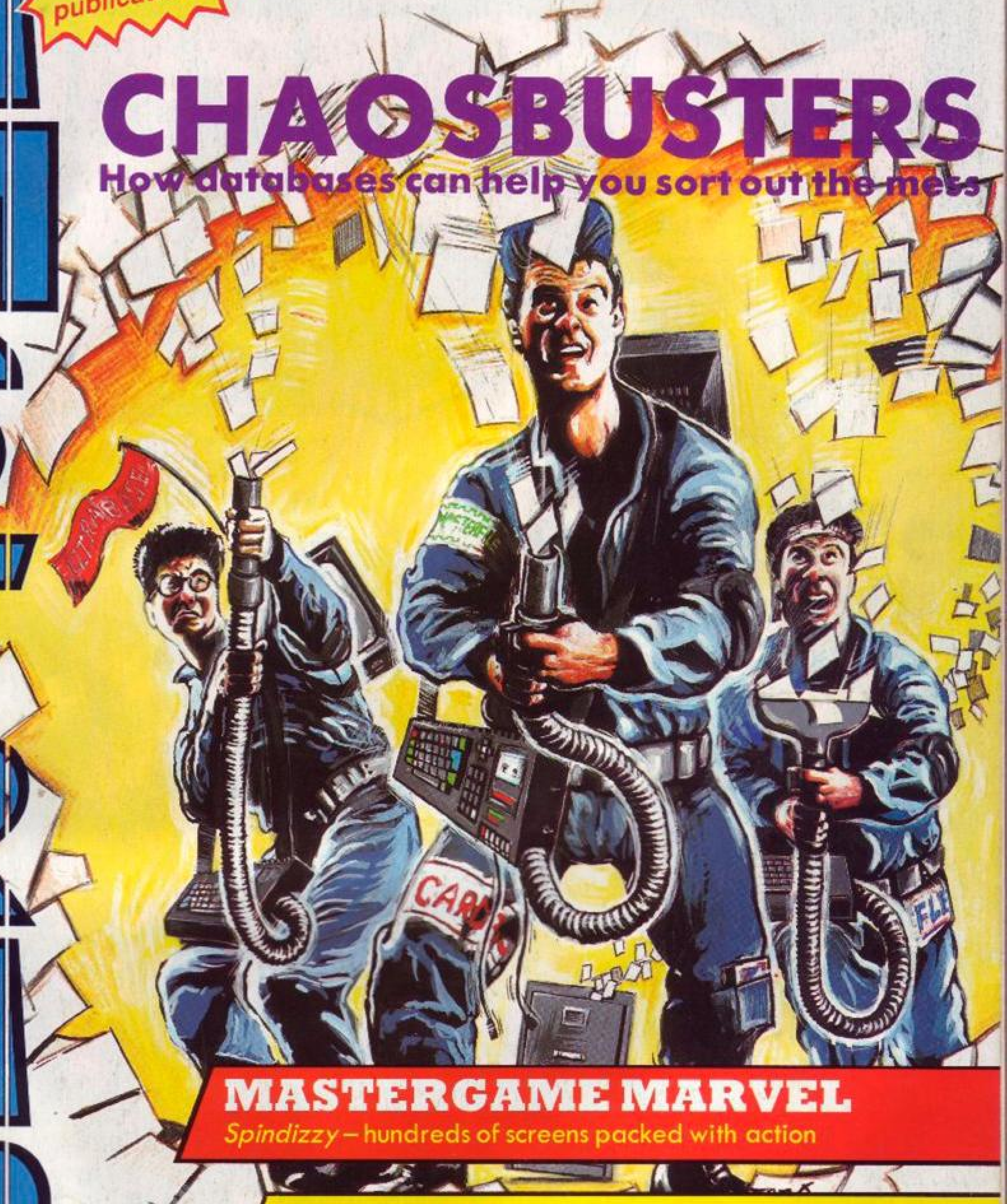
AMSTRAD ACTION

NOT an official Amstrad publication!!

THE MOULD-BREAKING MEGAZINE FROM FUTURE PUBLISHING

CHAOSBUSTERS

How databases can help you sort out the mess



MASTERGAME MARVEL

Spindizzy – hundreds of screens packed with action

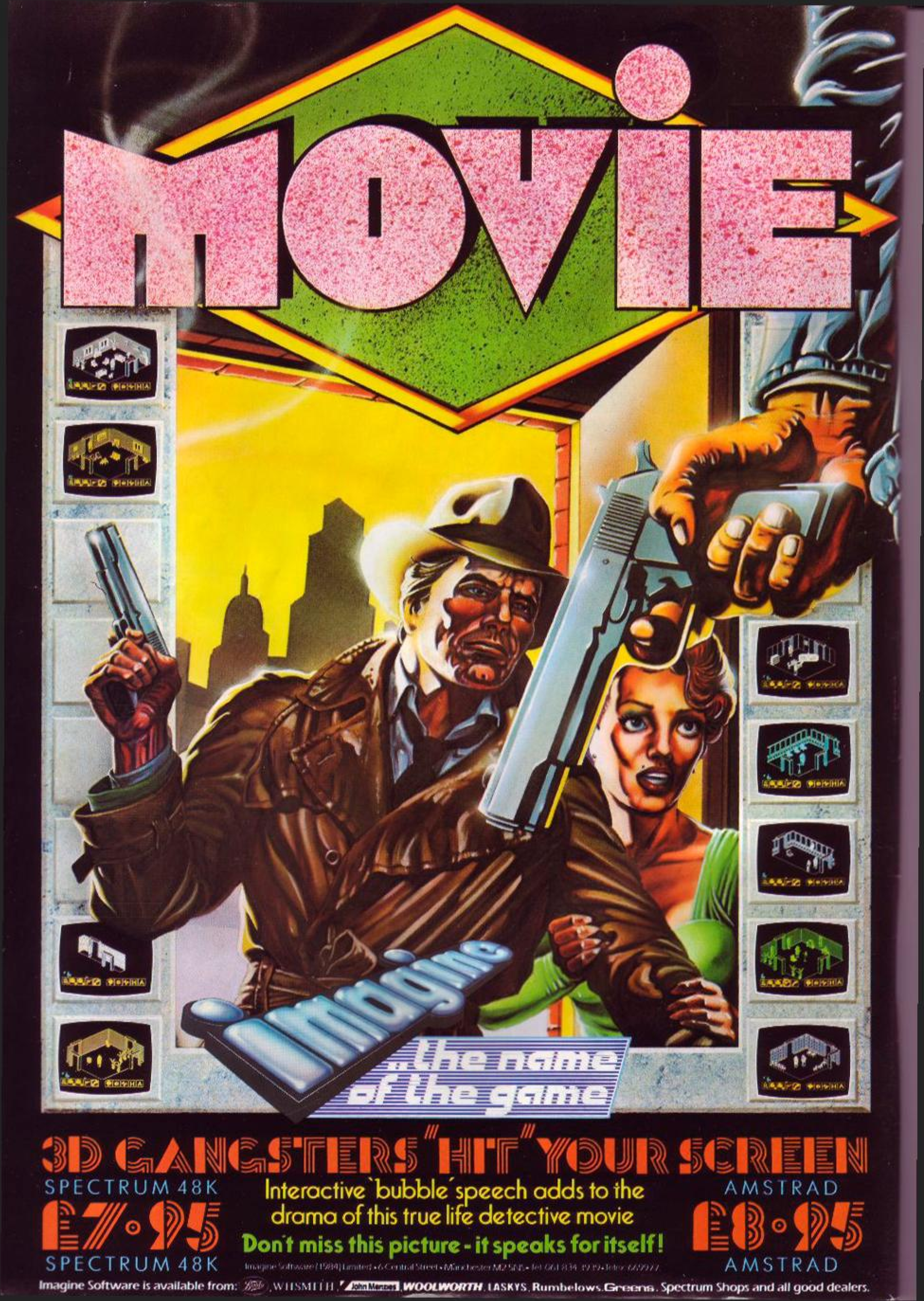
MASSIVE MAPS

Sweevo's World and *Chimera* revealed in vibrant AmstradActionColor.

LORD OF THE RINGS

The Pilgrim ventures into the *The Hobbit's* huge successor.

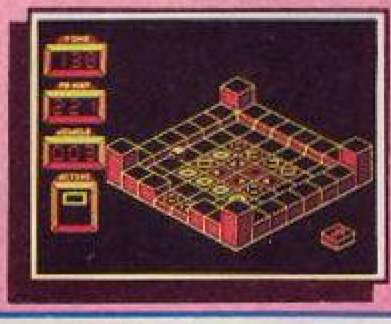
And get a load of *Drumkit* – a foot-stompin' type-in to give you rhythm without the blues. *PSS* – we preview the wargamers' stunning French software. *Amstrad Show* – full report. *DMP 2000* – our verdict on the latest Amstrad printer. Plus competitions, special offers, high scores and a whole lot more.


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THE LINE-UP

AMSTRAD ACTION MARCH 1986

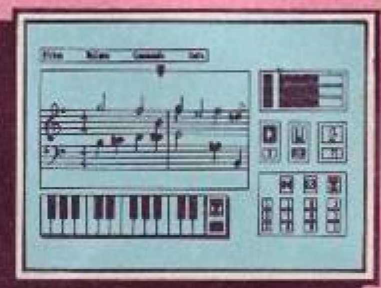
HOT REVIEWS



MARCH SPECIALS



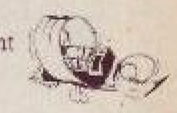
JUICY OFFERS



ACTION REGULARS

















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Pitched against the Dragon is Allied Commander J. P. Stryker. A courageous fighter, he quickly rose through the ranks during World War II; and is widely respected for his integrity and leadership abilities.



BRUCE LEE

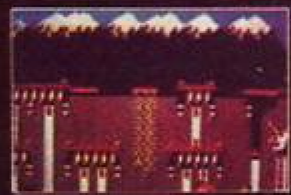
Twenty secret chambers to explore

Unique multiple player options

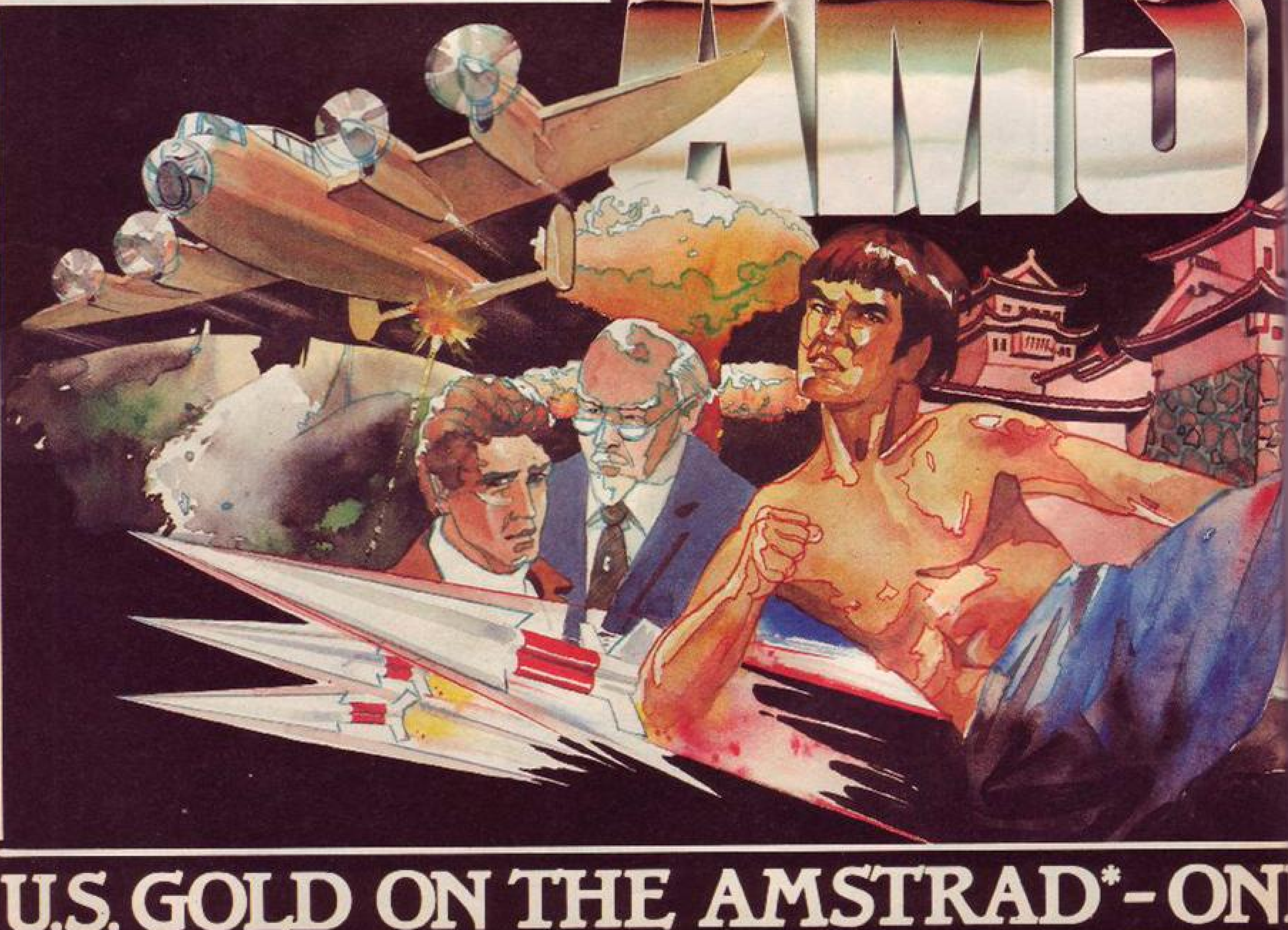
Dazzling graphics and animation

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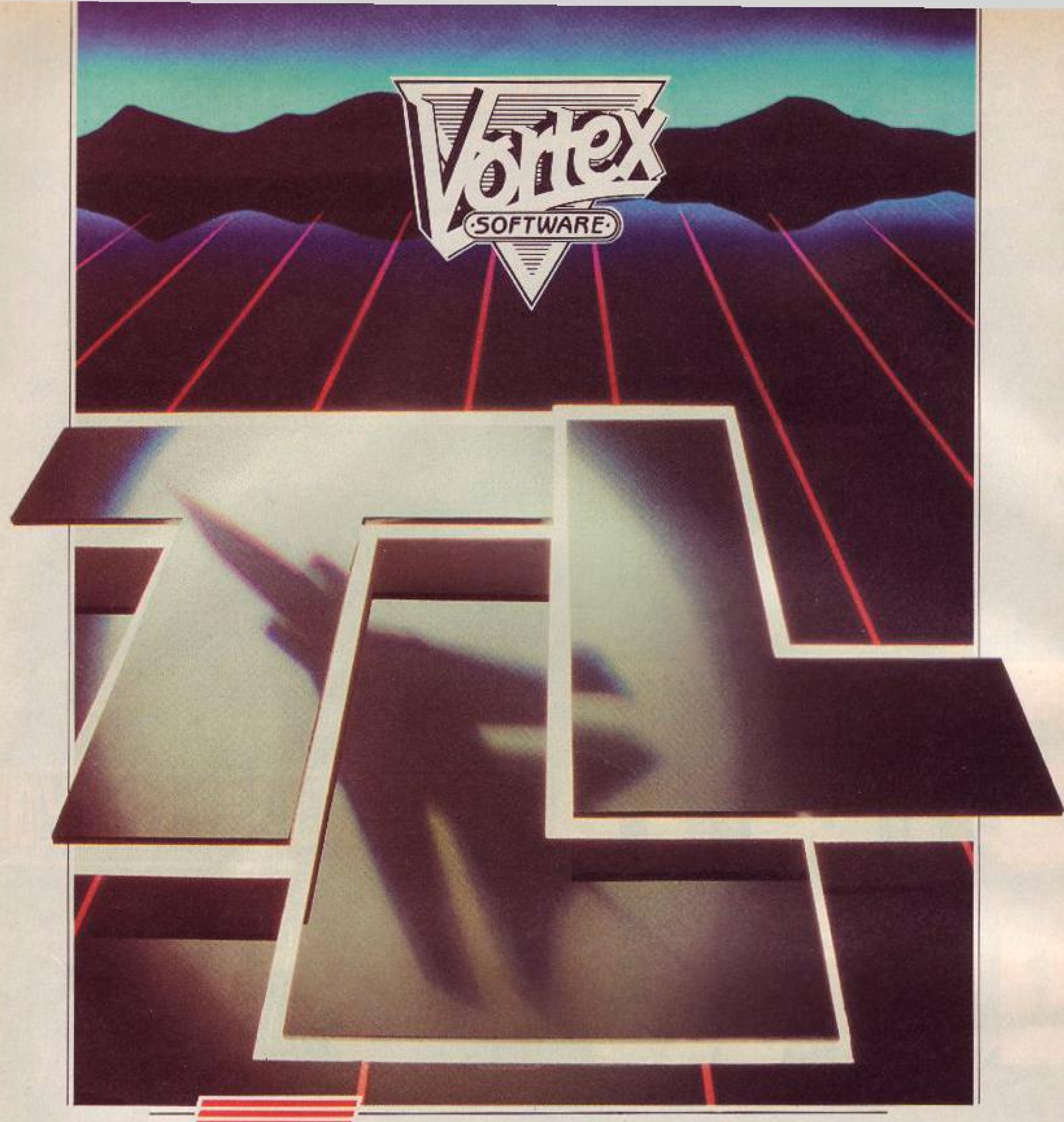
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Dear Readers,

There've been some big changes here at AA recently, all of them for the good. We've taken on not just one, but *two*, new members of staff – see elsewhere on this page for the gory details – and also moved into luxurious new offices.

This is a long-overdue step. If you can imagine what it's been like having to share a chair with Bob Wade and his T-shirts for six months you'll appreciate my relief. In our new offices, *everyone* will have their own chair. There will be *no* sharing.

Almost seriously, though, folks – it's been pretty cramped at AAHQ these past few months. The new offices and staff will allow us to be more efficient, and so to produce an even better magazine.

This issue's not half bad, though, is it? The 116 action-packed pages contain something for everyone. If they don't, I'll eat my hat. Not that I wear one. *Spindizzy* is an amazing Mastergame, there are some cracking Raves and Serious Software is packed full of useful and entertaining stuff. And don't ignore this month's Type-in – it will produce some amazingly funky effects.

There's lots of that lovely feedback from readers as well. We love reading it and printing it; you obviously love writing it. But there must be thousands of you out there who've never written either to ReAction or to Voice of the People. Why not give it a try? Nationwide fame etc. could be yours, all for the price of a stamp.

Peter Connor

Amstrad Action
The Old Barn
Somerton
Somerset TA11 7PS
☎ 0458-74011

(This is the address for all editorial matters and for subscriptions, but not for advertising)

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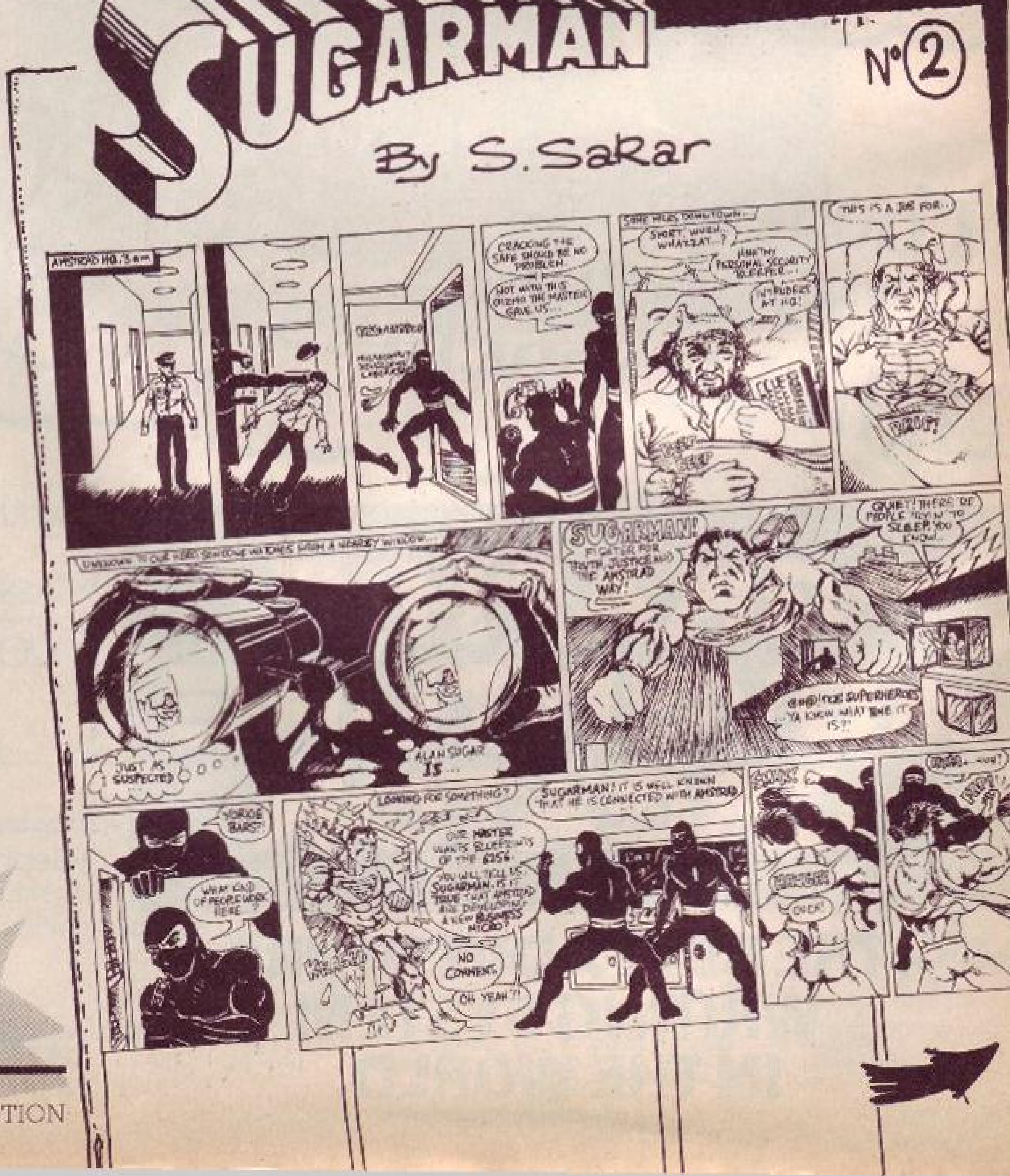
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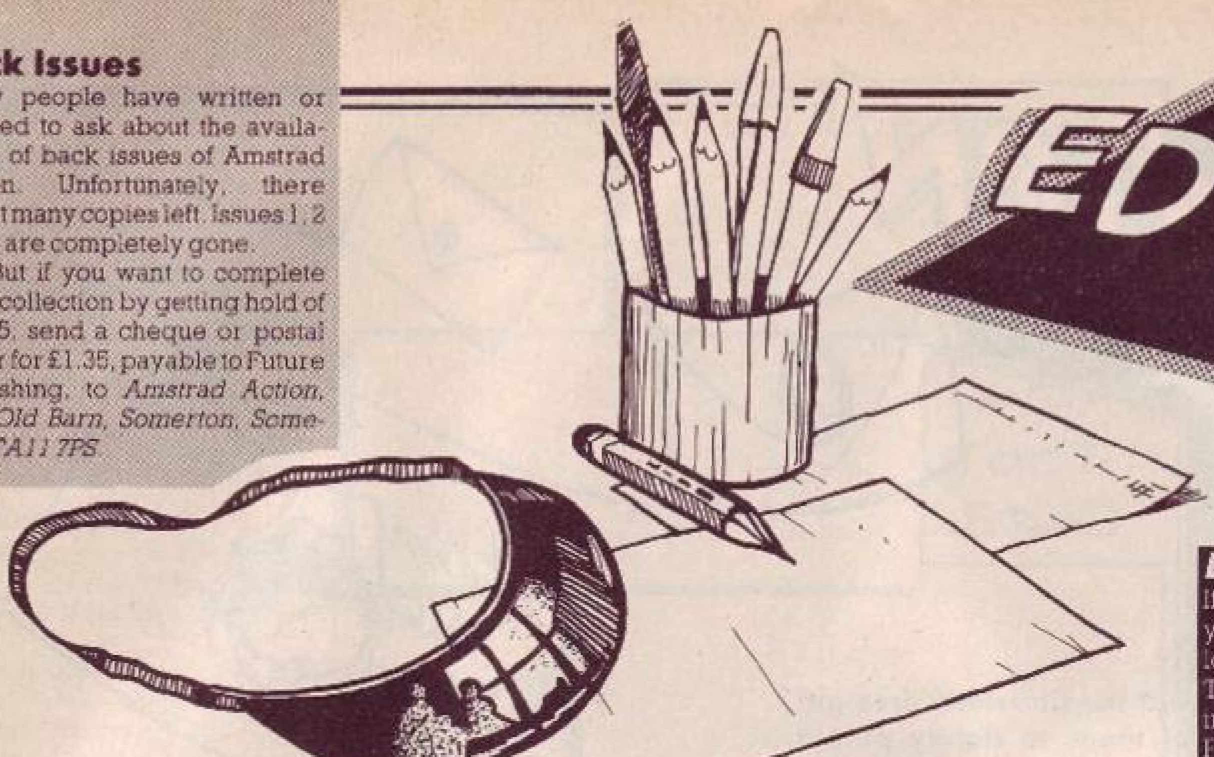
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ED LINES



Back Issues

Many people have written or phoned to ask about the availability of back issues of Amstrad Action. Unfortunately, there aren't many copies left. Issues 1, 2 and 4 are completely gone.

But if you want to complete your collection by getting hold of 3 or 5, send a cheque or postal order for £1.35, payable to Future Publishing, to *Amstrad Action, The Old Barn, Somerton, Somerset TA11 7PS.*

Elite discs

If you've ordered *Elite* on disc, you may have to wait a little longer than was expected. There's a desperate shortage of 3 inch discs at the moment, and Firebird just can't get hold of them in large enough volume to satisfy demand. As soon as they are available, we'll have copies to send out to you.

New staff

Andrew Wilton is Amstrad Action's new Technical Editor. Andrew was born 21 years ago in Leighton Buzzard but has overcome this handicap to land one of the most prestigious jobs in Somerset journalism.



On the way to his appointment with destiny he called in at Cambridge University for three years, studying Maths and Law. So he should be able to deal with the hard sums and the libel cases. At university he spent much of his time editing a student magazine. He also became fluent not just in Z80 code but in 6502 as well.

The photograph. Well, Andrew claims it was taken on the morning of an exam when he was suffering from a hangover. So don't be too hard on him.

Andrew's technical know-how will greatly strengthen what we have to offer and will mean that at least one person in the office will know how to change a plug. Readers' technical enquiries will be meat and drink to him. So if you've got any problems, put them down on paper and send them in.

Jane Toft, 25, is the latest addition to the AA Art Team. She studied Graphic Design at Polytechnic and has been a freelance designer for the past year. Her work was so impressive that we couldn't turn her down.

New office...

The Old Barn. Sounds nice, doesn't it? Just the place for the nature-loving staff of Amstrad Action to move in to. Of course, the cows and horses are moving out before the Arnolds move in. We might keep the straw, though, just in case it gets particularly cold.

The new offices are a mere five minutes' walk from our old ones, and are situated very near to Somerton's exclusive and chic Brunel Shopping Centre. Here you can buy everything you want, as long as you don't want very much.

The move should inaugurate a new period of harmony and efficiency for the AA Team. No more dodging Trev's scalpel if you want to make a coffee, no more glare from the proximity of Bob's disgusting T-shirts, no more view over the petrol station forecourt. No, it's going to be good for us. We think it will be good for you too.

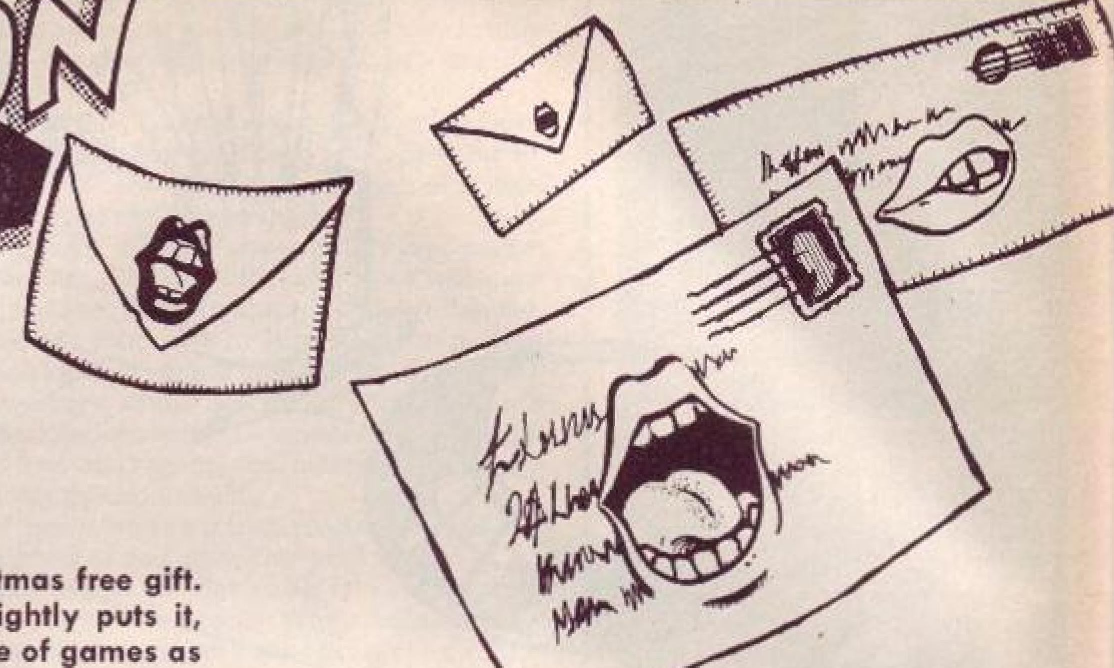
The address for all editorial correspondance is now **Amstrad Action, The Old Barn, Somerton, somerset TA11 7PS.** The telephone number has not changed.



Kung Fu/Number 1

If you're still wanting to transfer these two programs from tape to disc, have a dekko at the Cheat Mode pages where there are two fairly short listings which will do the business for both games.

Re-ACTION



Lots of letters this month about the Christmas free gift. Well, almost free. As one of them so rightly puts it, 'what's 50p?' Next to nothing for a couple of games as good as those.

Lots of help, too, for Stephen Penn, who was looking for a 464 without monitor, a much more common phenomenon than we'd supposed.

So keep 'em comin'. The more you write, the more we can print. But be careful – if your letter falls into one of the categories Mr R.C. Hawkins so cruelly outlines, it could be a little embarassing for you.

Monitor minus

With reference to Stephen Penn of Ramsgate in Issue 5, who wrote saying that he would like to get a CPC 464 without monitor and with a modulator for less than £150 – I wanted, and got, the same in November 1985.

The first place I saw the 464 without monitor was in a mail-order catalogue for £219. So I knew that it could be bought on its own.

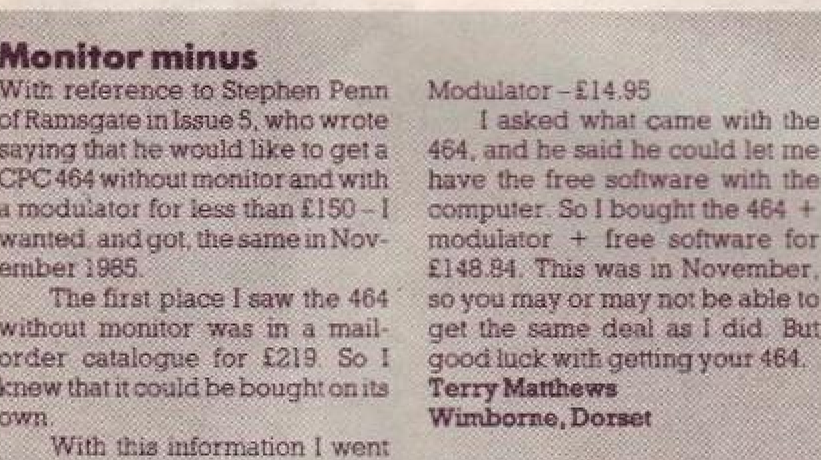
With this information I went to various High Street shops with no luck, until I went to Curry's. I asked about the 464 and the manager showed me the unit and got out the price list, which read something like this:

464 with colour monitor – £299.99 + free software
464 with green screen – £199.99 + free software
464 only – £133.99
Modulator – £14.95

I asked what came with the 464, and he said he could let me have the free software with the computer. So I bought the 464 + modulator + free software for £148.84. This was in November, so you may or may not be able to get the same deal as I did. But good luck with getting your 464.

Terry Matthews
Wimborne, Dorset

Thanks for the info, Terry. Sounds like you got a pretty good deal. Thanks also to B.J. Norris of Slough, Jane Fisher of Luton and D.Plows of Mildenhall, who all wrote to point out that catalogues such as Littlewoods', Grattans' etc. offer the monitorless 464. But as they also point out, the prices can be a bit steep: around £220 for the 464.



Plea for help

We are new to all this computer jargon, as we only bought our Amstrad CPC 6128 for Christmas, supposedly for our children, but we grown-ups (!!?) are hooked. We also got 'sorry, can't spell' advice from friends on games, and chose *Sorcery +*. WOW! what a game. We all love it and had a great time trying to figure out what was needed where and drowning with persistent regularity.

But eventually our genius of the family, our eight-years-old son, found the source of energy, then we were really going.

So now we have reached the Necromancer, but we can't seem to defeat him. HELP! We're all getting very frustrated. Someone out there please take on us dumb newcomers.

Love your magazine, by the way. At least you seem to realise that not everyone out there has a computer degree and give us information as opposed to clever jargon, which means not a thing to us.

Amstrad we love you!

Chris Leadbetter
Worthing

We don't know the answer for certain, but we suspect you need to have all four hearts to do anything at all to the nasty necromancer. Of course, we could be wrong. Can anyone out there offer more help?

Subs sadness

I cannot understand how you can give free games to post subscribers and not to subscribers who buy from their newsagent.

The reason I buy from my newsagent is because I cannot afford to pay out £15.50 at once, which I feel a lot of people would be in the same way. It is much easier to pay out £1.00 at a time than the full amount.

I don't feel it fair, especially for youngsters who save their pocket money for this great magazine.

I have a regular order for the magazine. So come on, be fair. Let everyone join in on the free stuff. The easy way round it is to print a voucher, then every so often we send them in for our free game.

Pam Hamerton
Preston

You seem to be suffering from what accountants call 'cash-flow problems'. Basically, this means you haven't got a lot of money. This is a problem that magazines suffer from too – especially in their infancy. That's one reason why they have subscriptions – to get a lot of money in quickly so that they can pay the bills. The other reason is that magazines get more money per issue sold on subscription than through newsagents. We realise that it's tough on people who can't afford £15.50 at one go, but that's the way the cookie crumbles. It wouldn't really help to print vouchers for free games – people who subscribe could also send them in and we'd end up giving away so many that we probably wouldn't be around much longer.

Rewarding results

I'd like to take this chance to say that being one of those in the minority against listings, I may have been a bit hasty in casting a 'NO' vote. I am referring to the short programs from *The Amazing Amstrad Omnibus* in Issue 3. When first getting my Arnold I used to take ages typing out

programs, and it's the same old story – when I RUN the program it wouldn't work. But you kept your listings short, with rewarding results.
George McDougall

One complaint

My one complaint is that AA still has a juvenile approach, although this has improved since Issue 1.

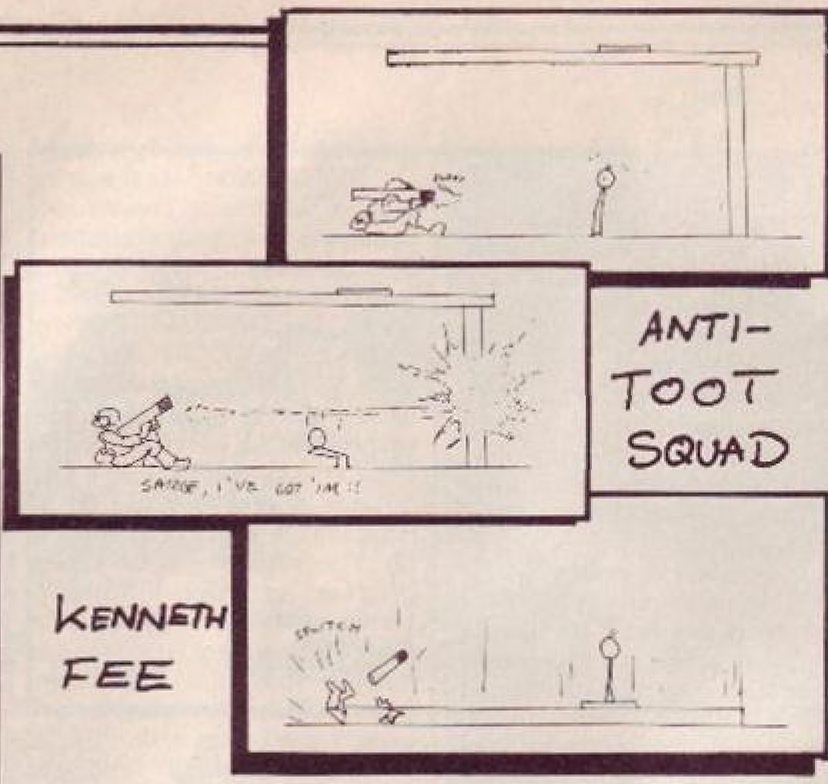
Secondly, a club request. Could you please mention *Wrekin Computer Club*? We meet weekly and are open to users of any micro. More details on Wellington 55148, weekends only. Ask for Kelvin – that's me. If there are any AMSTRAD users in the Telford area interested in forming a user group, please write.

Also wanted are Amstrad pen-pals. I'm 30 (yes, that old!). My main interests are adventures and simulations, but I also play my fair share of arcade games. Anyone interested either write or send an *Easi-Amsword* file and give file name. (Cassette 464).

I noticed in Issue 4 that Frank Brammer had not had received the free software pack for the 464. If anyone would like an unopened pack, drop me a line. First come, first served.

Finally, a plea from the heart. DON'T SHOOT THE TOOT.
K Clarke, 21 Clunbury Rd, Wellington, Telford, Salop TF1 3PA

I'm very surprised I printed your letter after you called us 'juvenile.' But I'm a forgiving type. I can't promise anything about Toot though.



Good Byte

In your fifth issue I sent away for a joystick to Good Byte, 94 Leather Lane, London EC1. A few days later I had a letter from the Post Office saying 'Gone away'. So I wrote to tell other children not to send for things from Good Byte as they are not there.
Zac Taylor,
Bristol

Thanks Zac. We're sorry you've had trouble getting in touch with Good Byte – as have quite a few other people. It's just that they moved, and after a few weeks the Post Office stops forwarding letters. So, if you want to get in touch with Good Byte they're at: Units 10/11, Imperial Studios, Imperial Road, London SW6. Tel 01-731-4555

Poor parents

As an overworked, under-paid parent I object to your 'parents are generally a good bet'. If I wasn't as hooked on my Amstrad as my sons are I would be angry!

But back to my main point. I did in fact buy my CPC 464 without monitor from Curry's with modulator – total price £165. They did not suggest it – I did. My club, Janet Fraser, also sell it on its own. So Stephen should ask around, before begging from *poor* parents!
Mrs. K B Knowles
Bournemouth

My apologies – I hope your kids haven't been too persistent in their demands for computer goodies. Thanks also for the info. But I still suspect that a lot of parents are a pretty good bet.

Horns of a dilemma

First I would like to congratulate Alan Sugar on winning the RITA awards for personality of the year. I think he deserved to.

Secondly I wish to congratulate you on a well-produced magazine that is packed with information you don't have to be a genius to understand.

Now to the main part of the letter. I am in dilemma. I do not know which of these two things to get – the 64K expansion from DK Tronics or a disc drive, as there are advantages and disadvantages to both. Could you please help me?

Lastly, I have enclosed a drawing. Could you include it in your next magazine as my mum would be dead pleased.
Yannis Christodolou
Aberdeen

That's a pretty nasty dilemma to be in Yannis. It all depends what you want out of your Arnold. You have to ask yourself what you'd use an extra 64K of memory or a disc drive for. *If you want the extra memory to run bigger and better serious programs – word processors, spreadsheets etc. – then you need to bear in mind that most of these probably need a disc drive anyway. If you're into programming, then that extra 64K will be a great help. And if you're main interest is in playing games, then it's no contest – the disc drive wins hands down.*

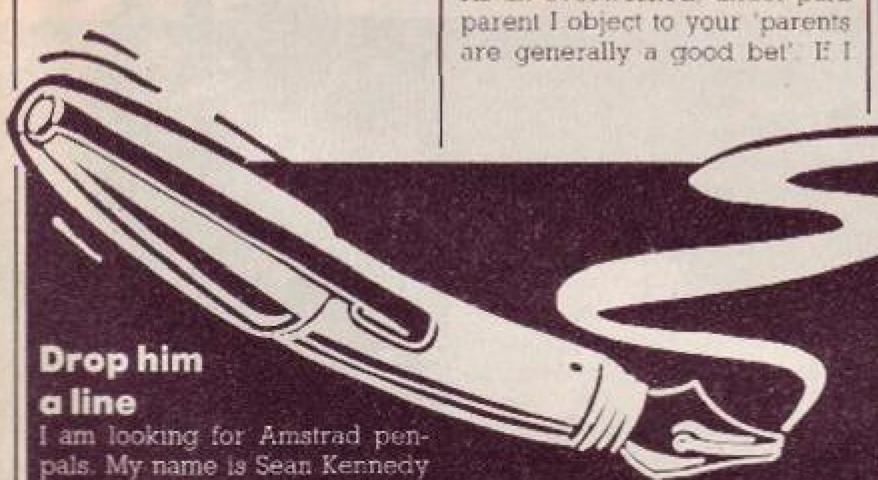
As for the drawing, Trevor is the supreme judge in matters of artistic merit. And he's a **very** *hard man to please. But there's always hope. Anyway, I should think your mum will be be dead pleased just to see your letter published.*

Not a zombie!

After being annoyed at 'serious' computer users going on about the Amstrad range being 'wasted' with games I as delighted to read the letter in Issue 5 by P.G. Worrall. I agreed with everything he said about Amstrad 'adult' users. The computer is ideally suited to both business and games – why can't people accept this?

Playing arcade games is looked down on. People buy TVs for entertainment, just like computers, but is the watching of films and comedies looked down on? I like to play a decent game, just as I like a decent adventure and I enjoy programming. Believe me, it is quite possible to enjoy both sides of computing!

I am not a mindless, alien-zapping, trigger-happy zombie, and I'm sure there are a lot more people like me. Admit it! Don't tell me that you don't enjoy relaxing after a hard day working on the old spreadsheet (I even know what they're for).
Gareth Graham
Cardiff



Drop him a line

I am looking for Amstrad penpals. My name is Sean Kennedy and I am a 16-year-old who lives in the Republic of Ireland. I own a CPC 464 and would be interested in receiving letters from Amstrad owners anywhere. I would like to swap general information on the machine, tips, pokes, and also software. All letters will be answered promptly.
Sean Kennedy, Anfield, Crossneen, Carlow, Eire

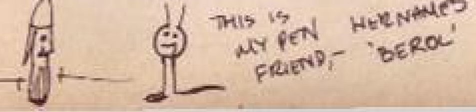
Pen pal plea

Would it be possible for me, a humble Irishman, to put a pen-pal ad in your amazing, precious paper?

My name is Mark. I am 12 years old and from the Republic of Ireland. I am an Amstrad 464 user for about 16 months. I would like to communicate with users of 11-14 from Ireland, Britain or France using a cassette recorded *Mini Office* word processor program. Please send introductory cassette and filename. I would like to hear from male and female users.

By the way, Toot is so fantastic Arnold should be renamed Toot.
Mark Dowling, Ballindangan Cross, Mitchelstown, Co. Cork, Republic of Ireland.

Your suggestion for renaming the Amstrads is very entertaining. But I'm not sure what Alan Sugar would make of it...



Letter writers dissected

I would like to start by saying that this is the first time I have written to the letters page of a computer magazine. Firstly because composing and spelling letters are not my strong points, but mainly because of the type of readers' letters that are published. They seemn to fall in to three categories:

(a) THE GROVELLING TYPE

This letter starts with 'I think your magazine is wonderful, the articles stimulating and colour pages breathtaking, blah, blah, blah' and continues in a sickly fashion with something like 'and if you would be so kind as to publish my letter in your amazing magazine then I shall continue to subscribe to your good selves until the cows come home.' They then end with hinting on what type of software or reward they would like to receive as a prize for being selected as Letter of the Month. What a damn cheek!!

(b) MY COMPUTER IS BETTER THAN YOURS BRIGADE

You must have all read some of this type of letter. The writer commences by boasting that his/her 'Amscomspec mark 10 computer' has better graphics, more memory, quadrophonic sound and built-in laser discs, and anyone who does not own one of these fabulous machines is a complete and utter moron.'

Well, the only moron here in my opinion is the writer. Who cares what an Amscompec etc. is capable of ? We all purchased our home micros based on how much we could afford and what was available at the time. Which brings me on to the last type of letter.

(c) THE MOANING MOANIES

This computer owner has been known throughout the ages. He/she may have purchased a Vic 20 just prior to the release of the Commodore 64, or a Spectrum just before the arrival of the Spectrum Plus, or even a Dragon or a TI99/A before those companies went to the wall. Perhaps even a CPC664 a couple of days before Mr. A. Sugar announced the launch of the CPC6128! I find a little compassion in my heart for this type of owner, but it's no good to keep on moaning about it. JUST STOP MOANING and use and enjoy the machine you spent your hard-earned cash on.

Having got that load off my chest, I am pleased to say that AA publishes very few of these types of letters. I have only read Issues 3 and 4, but have found the magazine refreshingly different, both in quality and content. Good luck with further issues. If I add any more then I shall find myself falling into category (a).

I would like to close by saying that I am one of your older readers, being 41 years young, and still enjoy a good old shoot-em-up when I can tear the wife and kids away from Arnold's keyboard.

R C Hawkins
Rayne, Essex

A very sharp analysis, Mr Hawkins – if a little unfair on the writers who like the magazine and say so. You've got to agree that they're absolutely right. You're also a bit harsh on those poor old 664 owners. I think they deserve rather more compassion than you're able to give them.



Heavy Metal

As a regular reader of AA I received with this month's issue my free game of *Kung Fu*. I wish to take the opportunity of writing to say how much I enjoyed the free gift.

I should also like to say that I feel AA to be an excellent magazine and in my view the best on the market for Amstrad users, although I would like to see more space given to The Pilgrim.

Finally, if anyone is looking for a pen friend who is into Heavy Metal music (especially Saxon) and uses an Amstrad computer, I'd be glad to hear from them.

Edward Taylor, 22 North View Avenue,
Bideford, N.Devon, EX39 3JL

Utopia

Thank you for taking the trouble to review our UTOPIA ROM. I feel, however, that your toolkit review section may have left-some readers a little confused on a couple of points.

First, your reviewer did not make clear the distinction between what are essentially two quite different types of product:

(1) UTOPIA adds to what may be termed 'system commands'. Examples of system commands already present on the Amstrad include LOAD, CAT and EDIT in BASIC; |ERA and |REN in AMSDOS; DISCCOPY and STAT in CP/M. This type of command is usually used in 'command mode' to speed up the developement of programs as well as to save a lot of time in everyday use of the computer.

(2) The other type of toolkit program, of which the Superpoewer ROM is an example, is largely meant to add features missing from the BASIC language. These commands are usually used from within BASIC programs, and so any programs written with these commands cannot be transferred to other machines unless the ROM is present. UTOPIA has very little in common with the Superpower ROM and is of much more general use.

Second, your review of UTOPIA seemed to entirely miss the major advantages of the program, and almost appeared to be suggesting that ROM software is a bad thing because it is more expensive than disc software. The aim of UTOPIA is to add commands to the system – it would be virtually useless on disc because you never know when you might want to use one of the commands (and there is not enough memory to load UTOPIA in and have a large BASIC program).

Any Amstrad owner with a disc drive will know the inconvenience of having to use the CP/M disc to format or copy a disc. With UTOPIA these facilities are instantly available at any time from BASIC.

The feature of UTOPIA which probably saves most time is its use of function keys. CTRL-ENTER produces the command RUN"DISC allowing you to auto-run a file on the disc (most commercial disc programs use a loader program called "DISC"). The function keys, when used with the CTRL key, produce various useful commands including LIST, CAT, MODE 2, erase backup files.

Third, in reply to your criticism that UTOPIA contains no graphics commands, this again belongs to a different product entirely. UTOPIA is a general utilities ROM, and as such provides far more than the competition at a very low price.

Finally, I would like to draw your readers' attention to a number of enhancements that have been added to UTOPIA since the review was written. These include screen dump commands and a multiple file copy command (like FILECOPY in CP/M). The price remains £29.95.

Mark Tilley
Arnor Ltd.

Mystery reader revealed

I have to confess to purchasing a copy of Issue 2 from Stratton's newsagents in Somerton! I was on the point of buying one of the Amstrad family and bought copies of each of the magazines to do the maximum amount of genning up.

I was amazed to find that all the action takes place in Somerton. Since buying Issue 2 I have managed to get copies of Issue 3 and a rather tatty Issue 1. I did ask in the newsagents to enquire if they knew where you lived, but they were unaware you lived in Somerton. Fortunately I bumped into Roy Jones from the bookshop who pointed me in your direction. I therefore looked in and chatted for a few minutes.

I was so impressed with the odd pages of Issue 4 which were lying about that I've decided to subscribe for the next year. This decision is in no way influenced by the incredible subscription offer you are making – but I won't turn it down!

I've found your Serious Software series very interesting and helpful. I've now made a decision on a word processor to suit my purposes, but I'm now waiting for

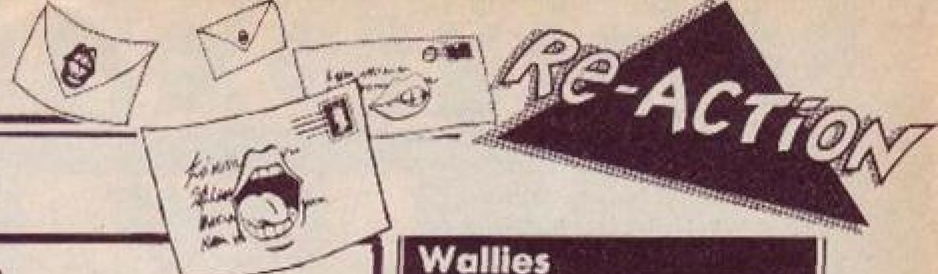


Kung Fu joy

When I saw that you were giving away two games (with the Christmas issue) I thought they would be rubbish.

Indeed, *Number 1* is dull and boring with no change of task, but *Kung Fu* is very good and addictive. It may not have super-hot graphics or the range of moves of *Fist*, but it has changing backgrounds and even a nice little tune. But the real winner of this game is the action replay facility. The joy I had watching how I sent my opponent reeling in slow motion was immense.

Andrew Bowden
Loughborough



similar help with a database.

The machine I bought is the 6128. During the week it goes with me to Stevenage, at weekends it comes home to Huish. With a journey of about 300 miles a week it is likely to be one of the best travelled Amstrads.

David Tunbridge
Huish Episcopi, Somerset

It's a relief to have this mystery cleared up at last – and to know that the formerly anonymous reader is pleased with his purchase. As for databases, look no further than this very issue for Bertram Carrot's in-depth analysis.





What's 50p?

Thank you for the special Christmas edition of AA and the free (well, what's 50p!) mega-gift. The games loaded and ran on my 664 with no trouble at all. I particularly liked *Kung Fu* wiht its excellent graphics and movement control, but the trouble is, when you are used to loading from disc, the time taken for a tape to load seems an eternity.

I am fairly new to computing and therefore not experienced enough to know how to alter the programs in order to save and run them from disc. Would it be possible for you to publish the altered listing to enable this to be done?

There must be growing numbers of people who have Amstrads with disc drives who, like me, are restricted to the number of games and utilities which can be purchased to run from disc. When these are available they are much more expensive than the tape version and in any case having had to a box of ten discs I have enough storage space for literally hundreds of tape programs.

I have a tape-to-disc utility which, although very good, still needs a deeper knowledge of programming than I have. Perhaps you could make tape-to-disc transfer a regular feature?

Like John Wright (Christmas issue) I too am in the mature bracket and think the magazine is going in the right direction. Good luck for the future and a very happy new year to you all.

Tony Hawkins
Lichfield

We printed a listing in the last issue to transfer Kung Fu. This month, in Cheat Mode, you'll find another listing to do the same for Number 1.

Unfortunately, the business of transferring commercial programs is fraught with dangers. Many companies are less than approving, since transfer means breaking their protection – in which case we could lay our selves open to charges of condoning or even encouraging illegal copying. However, I hope you found last month's general feature useful. And the time cannot be far off when software is released simultaneously on tape and disc.

Wallies

I think a lot of software houses are a bunch of wallies. Many conversions onto the Amstrad are poor or just plain indifferent, US Gold being one of the main offenders. Melbourne House are another. For example, *Way of the Fist* was painfully slow, had no bull, no changing backgrounds, poor music and sound effects. Come on software houses, the Amstrad is the best home mnachine on the market – let's have the software to prove it.

Mark Wing
Blackpool

Strong words, Mark. We actually made Fist the Mastergame, if you remember, so we didn't think it was too bad. And which US Gold games can you be thinking of?

Nasty hobbits

I need help with *Jet Set Willy*, the original version. I've seen the program in the Cheat Mode section, but when I run it, it tells me the memory's too full in 60, and also Type Mismatch in 470. I assure you there are no typing mistakes. Could you or any readers help me?

On the letter from Ken Walton in Issue 4 about *Hobbit* bugs. I too am infuriated by these bugs. It crashes every time I play it and surely it should not be on the shelves at £14.95 if it doesn't work. I've written to Melbourne House twice. They replied the first time earlier in the year (about three months late) but gave me no answer, saying they'd reply. Guess what? They didn't. So I wrote again and am still awaiting their letter. I don't think it will come.

Is there any way of preventing these bugs? Also, it has prevented me from buying *Lord of the Rings*. I dearly want it but I'm afraid this too will have bugs. Could The Pilgrim (mythical marvel) give this a full review and check for any bugs.

Steven Ward
Rotherham

For a full explanation of the JSW affair, see Cheat Mode. There do seem to be a lot of nasty little bugs in The Hobbit, but I'm sure M House will have done a much better job on Lord of the Rings, which The Pilg reviews in full in this issue.

Kung Fu pain

I don't know about *Kung Fu. Flung It* would be more suitable. Despite your ravings I remain unimpressed. My copy gets up to the following;

1) 2 player mode – no strength symbols. No score, going back to the menu each game.

2) 1 player mode after black belt grade (score 372) – figures reverse sides to strength symbols. Reverting to 2 player mode reverses left and right movements on both keyboard and joystick.

3) occasionally the fighters overlapped, apparently shadow boxing.

As Confucius would have said – 'velly confusing'. Is this intentional or did it lose something from the Japanese translation? Incidentally, did you know you gave the game away (no pun intended) when you said Chris Anderson 'fisted' his way to a black belt score? Just keep your finger on the fire button and more often than not you win. Next month do we get a free copy of the *Erratum* tape by BugBear software? I can't get very far into *Number 1* to criticise it. Sorry!

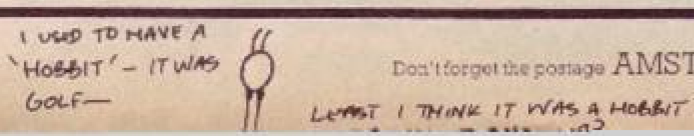
On another subject, Ken Walton's letter '*Hobbit* diatribe' was very interesting because it echoed exactly what I was going to write, if the above hadn't turned up. (Yes I'm a right moaner) Melbourne House didn't bother to reply to me either. My keyboard must be faulty as well because using *Tasword's* commands to delete a word – shift + DEL – also has the effect of deleting the whole line. Still, I think it has enough pros to allow one bug. Not *Hobbit* though. I think it stinks at that price, which is a shame because it was very playable on a friend's Spectrum.

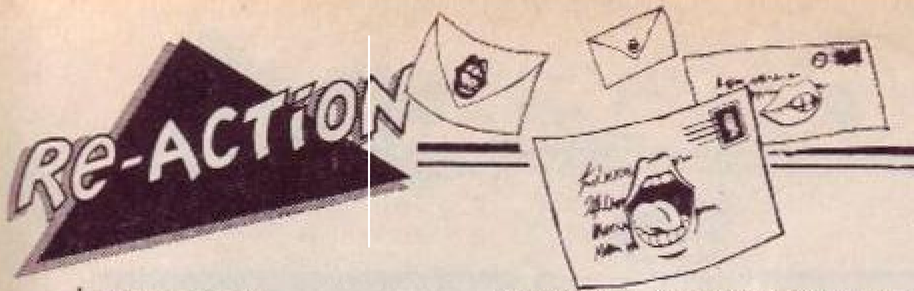
D H Goddard
Green Norton, Northants

Just goes to show you can't please everyone. We think KF's a pretty good game. I've tried just fisting my way to success, but it didn't do me much good. All the action replay showed was my painful defeat.









Marsport magic

I am very pleased about the *Marsport* mega-map. I was getting quite bored with *Marsport* until I saw your map. I was playing it for ages, then I put it away. Now you've given some tips, so out comes *Marsport*, dust an' all. I think your map was hard to understand at first, but after studying it it suddenly came to me clearly and forced me to play *Marsport*.

The game is quite excellent, but I would have liked some people – as in *Dun Darach*. I can't wait for *Fornax* and *Gath* to be released.

Stewart Moore
Pontefract



Disgruntled

As an independent, you might publish a few letters from disgruntled Amstrad owners. There must be some. If you have the time to skip through my letter to Amstrad (enclosed) you'll appreciate our problem – three duff keyboards!

I know two other Amstrad owners and both have struggled with the screen read out 'read error b'. At breaking point I spent half an hour on the phone to Amstrad. When a Service Dept. suggests the user alter tape head alignment within the guarantee period I look to magazines such as yours to see if others are suffering similar problems.

Regrettably, as our supplier ran out of keyboards we've now opted for a cash refund. I'm sure Amstrads are good – when they work. Shame they can't improve their product quality control.

R Chillingworth
Watford

A sad tale, Mr. Chillingworth, which surprises me. Amstrad have always had a very good reputation for the quality of their computers, recording a very low percentage of returns. But we'd certainly be interested in hearing from other people who think they've had a raw deal.

Duffers' guide?

I'd like, if I may, to say a word on behalf of the older owners of Amstrad computers. I have found AA to be one of the best of the Amstrad magazines and have given most of my reactions and comments on the questionnaire. There are, however, one or two points which I'd like to add.

Although I am a firm fan of some games – particularly simulations and war games – I bought the 464 for serious use as a word-processor and for educational use. It would be nice, therefore, if AA had a regular section on educational programs (although I realise there are all too few of them). I feel, also, that I would welcome more material on serious hardware and software. I would like to put in an additional plea with respect to the style of your reviews.

I am a complete duffer where computers are concerned and see them as tools rather than as an end in themselves. I can see that most of your reviewers take pains to keep their comments as clear as possible for people like me. However, even their best efforts are sometimes not enough: many of the reviews have references to previous software or to techniques about which most 'duffers' know very little.

Would it be possible – in a similar vein to the Second Opinions inn the games reviews – to get serious hardware and software reviewed by a complete novice/duffer who would be able to present its strengths and weaknesses from a total layman's point of view – something like a *Duffer's Corner* for each piece oif hardwrare/software?

I am sure that such a simple approach in terms of what the item can or cannot do, what it can be used for and what the problems are would be of immense help to many people.

Keith Pye
Newmarket

I take your point about novices, Keith, and I'm glad you appreciate our efforts to be as clear as possible in Serious Software. *The problem is, I think, that a true novice would have very little of interest to say about most programs. Nearly all reviews of wordprocessors have to be at least slightly comparative. Someone who'd never used one would probably just say how wonderful it was – even though it might be much worse than other similar products. For more technical programs, the problem is even more acute: what would a novice have to say about a toolkit or a machine code monitor?*

For longer features, such as those on Spreadsheets or Accounts packages, we do already give an explanation first of what such programs do and then examples of how they do it. At the moment all we can do is to be as clear as possible and hope that we get the point across.

More about moaning minnies

Wahay!! At last someone has had the nerve to write in to tell 664 owners to stop moaning about the arrival of the 6128. Well done Mr. Frank A. Brammer. Everything you said was true. I myself own a 464 and I certainly didn't complain about any of the points that Mr. Brammer mentioned.

Anyway, on to something else. May I congratulate you on the first few type-ins in the mag. I thought were great, but please don't make them any longer because I hate sitting at the keyboard for hours on end.

Please try to get my surname right as a lot of people get it wrong.

Paul McGlinchey
Derby

Have you no feelings of sympathy, Mr. McGlinchey (hope that's right)? It's very easy to tell 664 owners to stop moaning if your machine is a 464, isn't it?

The cookie crumbles

May I add my raspberry to the 664 'moaning minnies'? Anyone with any sense, or who reads reliable computer magazines, must have known that the update to the 6128 was coming, even if they thought it would be launched in the USA first and thought it would be a lot longer before it would be available here. They just couldn't wait, could they?

I thought myself it might be a year before it was available, but was prepared to struggle on with my ZX 81 (yes, ZX 81!) until it appeared, rather than waste my money by being impatient. It was my good luck, and their bad luck, that Amstrad decided to launch the 6128 here a lot sooner. But, 'that's the way the cookie crumbles'!

J R Oaten
Ashford, Kent

Bugged *Composer*

Whilst trying to type in a program from your February issue I encountered a bug! The program was entitled *The Music Composer*.

The bug appeared in line 1310. The listing is accepted, but when you wish to listen to your composed music, an error report appears reading 'subscript out of range in line 1310'.

I checked the listing of line 1310 with line 1310 in the magazine and they are both exactly the same.

Could you please advise me how to correct this mistake.

Craig Parkinson
Rotherham

The Listings Editor replies: there's a common misunderstanding that when an error report refers to a line number this means that the error must be in that line. It very often isn't. I'm afraid you'll just have to painstakingly check through the rest of the listing, Craig. There is an art to debugging a listing, but not one that can be explained in five minutes.

Money snag

My son got a CPC 464 for Xmas as well as AA magazine. We are all enjoying the Ocean free gift and Alastair, age 8, has scored 270 on *Number 1*.

But we have hit a snag with the Money Game program. Our program tells us we need a 'next' in Line 20. Not being experienced in computing I don't know where to put it. Can you help, please?

Mrs M F Findlay
Seaford, Sussex

See the reply to the above letter for an explanation of what may be going wrong. We suspect you could have omitted a 'next' in Line 130. Rest assured that the program does work properly.

Where's the club

I am writing to ask if I may join the Amstrad Action Club as I have recently purchased a CPC 464. I wish to find out all the information I can about it.

Charles Glancy
Glasgow

Sorry, Charles – there isn't an AA Club. Yet. The best I can suggest is to get the magazine regularly. You should find everything you need inside.

THE COLLECTION

WARGAMERS SERIES

The PSS WARGAMERS SERIES has been created to combine elements of a strategy game like chess with the added excitement of a graphic arcade game. They are for the player who wants a serious but stimulating game requiring both manual dexterity and mental agility. The strategic level of the games is played on a map system, whilst the tactical can be played in an optional arcade style with you actually firing guns and missiles.

THEATRE EUROPE – STRATEGY GAME OF THE YEAR 1985 – CRASH/ZZAP/AMTIX.

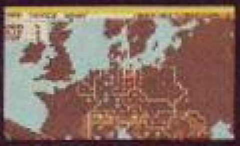
Theatre Europe portrays the next war in Europe. Command either NATO or the WARSAW PACT forces and control air/ground/nuclear and chemical units. Optional arcade sequences put you actually in the hot seat. 3 Level game where Level 1 is for beginners (the computer opponent will not use the Nuclear option). Level 2 is a "rational" game following the accepted strategies of NATO and the WARSAW PACT. In level 3 the computer plays a highly unpredictable game where anything can happen.

"THE ATMOSPHERE GENERATED BY THIS EXCELLENT GAME IS INCREDIBLE – VIRTUALLY UNRIVALLED BY ANYTHING ELSE AVAILABLE" ZZAP 64 JUNE '85 – GOLD MEDAL AWARD.

"HEAD AND SHOULDERS ABOVE ALL OTHER WARGAMES – A POWERFUL LESSON" CCI JULY '85.





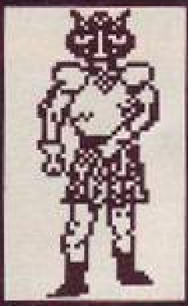


"IT MAKES YOU THINK MORE THAN MOST GAMES" – AA RAVE – AMSTRAD ACTION FEB '86.

A C At (S avail soon) £9.95

MIDAS







"GAME CONCEPT OF THE YEAR 1985" CRASH/ZZAP 64/AMTIX "GAME OF THE MONTH" – C & VG JAN '86

"CRASH SMASH" – JAN '86

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MIDAS – The Midas series of role playing real time graphic adventures are totally expandable. Not only do you have stunning 3D fully animated graphics, real time interactive conflict and conversation sequences, but you can transfer your player character into different scenarios from the Midas range. A series of expansion modules are also planned to add new opponents, larger scenarios and different quests to increase indefinitely the playing life of each game written with MIDAS.

SWORDS & SORCERY – represents the first example of the Midas range. As with all role playing adventures, the aim of the game is to develop your character – you might want to become an expert swordsman, or perhaps a cunning thief – all things are possible with Swords & Sorcery. There are also quests within quests for those who want to follow them – some are given, others must be found – some are lost causes – the choice is yours!

Although possibly the most complex program yet attempted on a home micro, the controls are simplicity itself. Just six keys will control your progress around the dungeon and operate the menu system for all your other commands.

"SWORDS & SORCERY REPRESENTS THE MOST SOPHISTICATED D + D TYPE GAME YET SEEN ON A HOME MICRO" COMPUTER GAMER – GAME OF THE MONTH – DEC '85

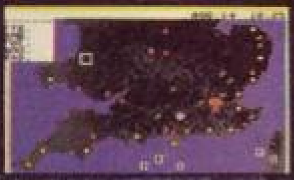
BATTLE OF BRITAIN

A 3 level game with you in control of fighter command during the summer of 1940. Optional arcade sequences include flying a Spitfire in aerial combat and firing an anti aircraft gun in ground to air fighting.



"ONE OF THE MOST PLAYABLE WARGAMES EVER" COMPUTER GAMER DEC '85
GO AND BUY IT!" – AMTIX DEC '85
"SUPERB!" – ZZAP 64 XMAS '85

A C (S avail soon) £9.95



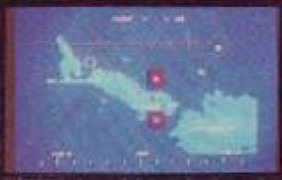
BATTLE FOR MIDWAY

You are in command of the US Pacific fleets 6 months after the attack by the Japanese on Pearl Harbour. It is a 3 level game depicting 3 different Japanese strategies.



"COMMENDED – STRATEGY GAME OF THE YEAR 1984 – C & VG
"ONE OF THE MOST AMBITIOUS WARGAMES EVER RELEASED" ZZAP 64 DEC '85

A C S M £9.95



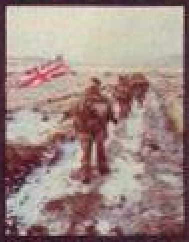
Strategic WARGAMES SERIES

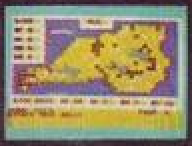
THE STRATEGIC WARGAMES SERIES has been designed with the wargame "purist" in mind. The games are played on a map system, are "phased" and use symbolic representation of the units. Playability is the key note in the series with 5 levels of difficulty suitable for beginner and expert alike.

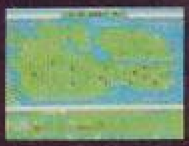
FALKLANDS '82

"A CLASSIC EXAMPLE OF HOW WARGAMES SHOULD BE PRESENTED" CBM USER JAN '86
"FALKLANDS '82 WILL CHALLENGE AVID WARGAMERS FOR MONTHS" COMPUTER GAMER JAN '86 AS

S C (A avail soon) £7.95









IWO JIMA – NEW RELEASE

In the closing stages of WWII, the US Marines fought their costliest and toughest battle of the entire war – the capturing of the island of IWO JIMA. You command those forces whilst the computer controls the Japanese.

C (S avail soon) £7.95

A	=	AMSTRAD
S	=	SPECTRUM
C	=	CBM 64
At	=	ATARI
M	=	MSX

MACADAM BUMPER

Pinball Wizards will love this game. Playing the table provided will provide hours of fun, but with Macadam Bumper you can design your own layout – from positioning flippers and bumpers right down to adjusting the Tilt sensitivity. The possibilities are endless!

"THIS IS THE PINBALL GAME IN EXCELSIS!" RAVE OF THE MONTH – YOUR SPECTRUM NOV '85
"AN EXCELLENT PACKAGE" – 87% – CRASH SEPT '85

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AMSTRAD

Arcade

Killer-by
fr
Kon

YIE AR KUNG FU

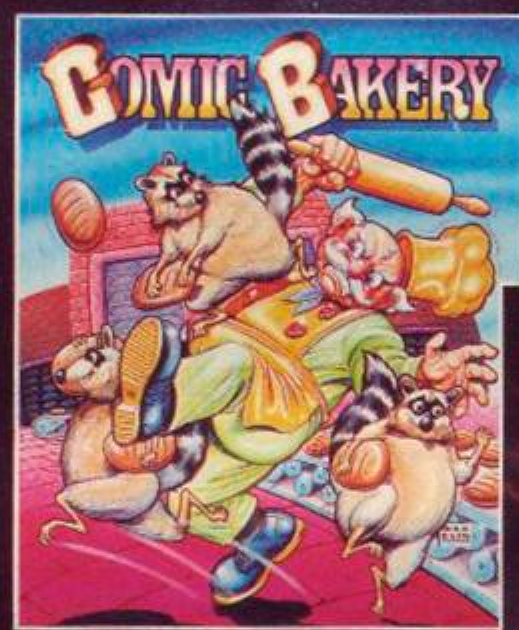
If you can master the ten moves, expect the unexpected and FIGHT for your LIFE against the formidable masters of the martial arts you may live to meet them again on the mountain or in the Temple.

COMIC BAKERY

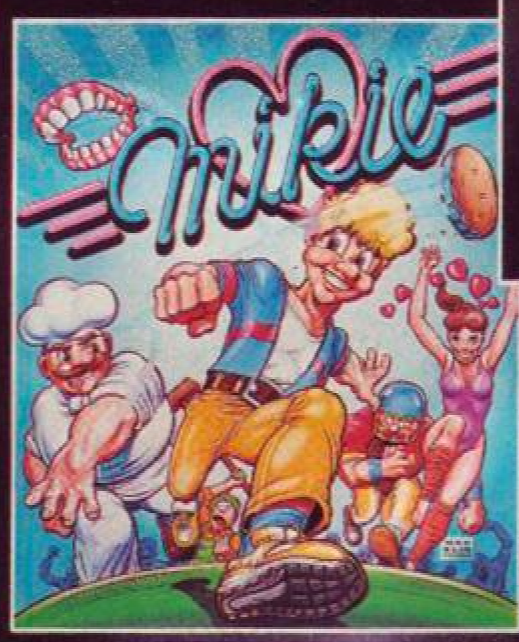
*Panic in the bake-shop
*Fast and furious arcade fun.
*Help Joe the baker defend his loaves from the rascally raccoons.
*Another red-hot Konami cookie!

MIKIE

Mikie plays a knockout frantic farce in the classroom, locker room and the high school cafeteria. Hip-zap, door attack, throw balls and pies...but can you make him hand his love letter to his girl-friend?







ARC
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imagine ...the name of the game

Imagine Software (1984), 6 Central Street
Manchester M2 5NS. Tel: 061-834 3939. Telex: 669977

-action



PING PONG

You can almost feel the tension of the big match breaking through the screen...the expectant crowd is almost on top of you! You return the service with a top spin backhand, then a forward back-spin, the ball bounces high from your opponent's looping, defensive lob...SMASH!...a great shot opens the score...but this is only your first point! Play head to head or against the computer in this, Konami's first and best table-tennis simulation.

HYPER SPORTS

Enter the stadium of Konami's No. 1 arcade smash-hit sports simulation.From the finesse and skill of Archeryand Skeet Shooting to the critical timing and brute force of weight lifting – six events to test you to your limit. Hyper Sports – continuing the challenge where 'Track and Field' left off.

only **8·95** each

Imagine Software is available from selected branches of:

Boots, WHSMITH, John Menzies, WOOLWORTH, LASKYS, Rumbelows, Greens, Spectrum Shops and all good dealers.

The Show goes

Arnold packs 'em in again at the second Amstrad Show, held in London's glamorou

The second Amstrad Computer Show, held at London's Novotel on January 11th and 12th, proved to be every bit as exciting – and crowded – as its predecessor back in October of last year. The crowds of visitors are estimated at around 10,000.

Just about everyone in the Amstrad world was there, with the notable exception of Alan Sugar. But he wasn't really missed – the range and quality of software and hardware on show was fascinating enough in itself.



A couple of our younger readers engrossed in *Kung Fu* on the Amstrad Action stand.

Pride of place has to go to **Screen Micros**, whose stand bristled with a range of exceptionally impressive peripherals from German manufacturers **Vortex**. Their memory expansions, reviewed in this issue, go from 64 up to 512K. Should give you room for a few good programs. Vortex's **Mark Bergen** claimed that in Germany the expansions had been 'selling so well that Amstrad didn't like it'. Well, it looks like they'll have to lump it: **Nigel Sinclair** of Screen reckoned they'd taken orders for 7,000 over the two days of the show.

Vortex were also displaying a 20Mb hard disc and a 1.4Mb floppy station. And there's a lot more to come from them over the next couple of months, including Silicon Disc drives, the MSDos board for the 6128 and a massive expansion board, again for the 6128, using an Hitachi Z80 chip which can directly address 512K of memory. Watch this space for news.

Another stand displaying a 20Mb hard disc was **Northern Computers**, the Amstrad networking specialists. Theirs was running an IBM, a couple of BBCs and umpteen Amstrads – simultaneously. As the company's **Gareth Littler** explained, the benefits for schools can be enormous. In Bootle, Liverpool, two schools on *different* sites are running the same system via a radio link. The Northern Computers hard disc will set you back £999, so you'll probably need to club together. We hope to bring you a report on a working Amstrad network very soon.

It wasn't just the Amstrad specialists who turned out. Mighty **Digital Research** even took a stand, and very pleased with it they were. In the two days they flogged over £3,000 worth of software to 6128 and 8256 owners in search of compilers or graphics programs.

Graphics, in fact, featured on many stands. **AMX** were in evidence with their new, improved Mouse. It's now got software to allow *Art* to run colour, and a *Utilities* package that gives exciting features such as magnification and replication. Explaining it all on the stand were the **Cygnet Software** team who wrote it. We'll be investigating the developements in our next issue.

Elsewhere the *Grafpad* was on view, courtesy of **Grafsales**. It prints on screen what you draw on the tablet, and may soon be capable of interfacing with none other than the AMX Mouse. It's another product we hope to get our hands on soon.

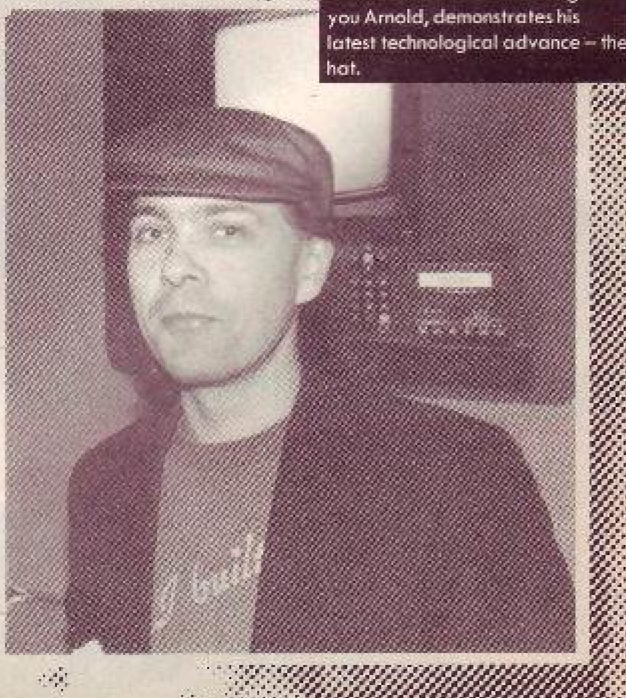
The Animator, from **Woolf Graphics**, was another intriguing program. It allows you to create cartoon-style animated figures by drawing 'key' frames – the program then works out the intervening frames. It produced some wacky and wonderful effects.

Games software was not particularly prominent – plenty of people were selling recent or even old games, but not many had the latest stuff displayed. But the **Blue Ribbon** range of budget games made their debut – reviews in Action Test.

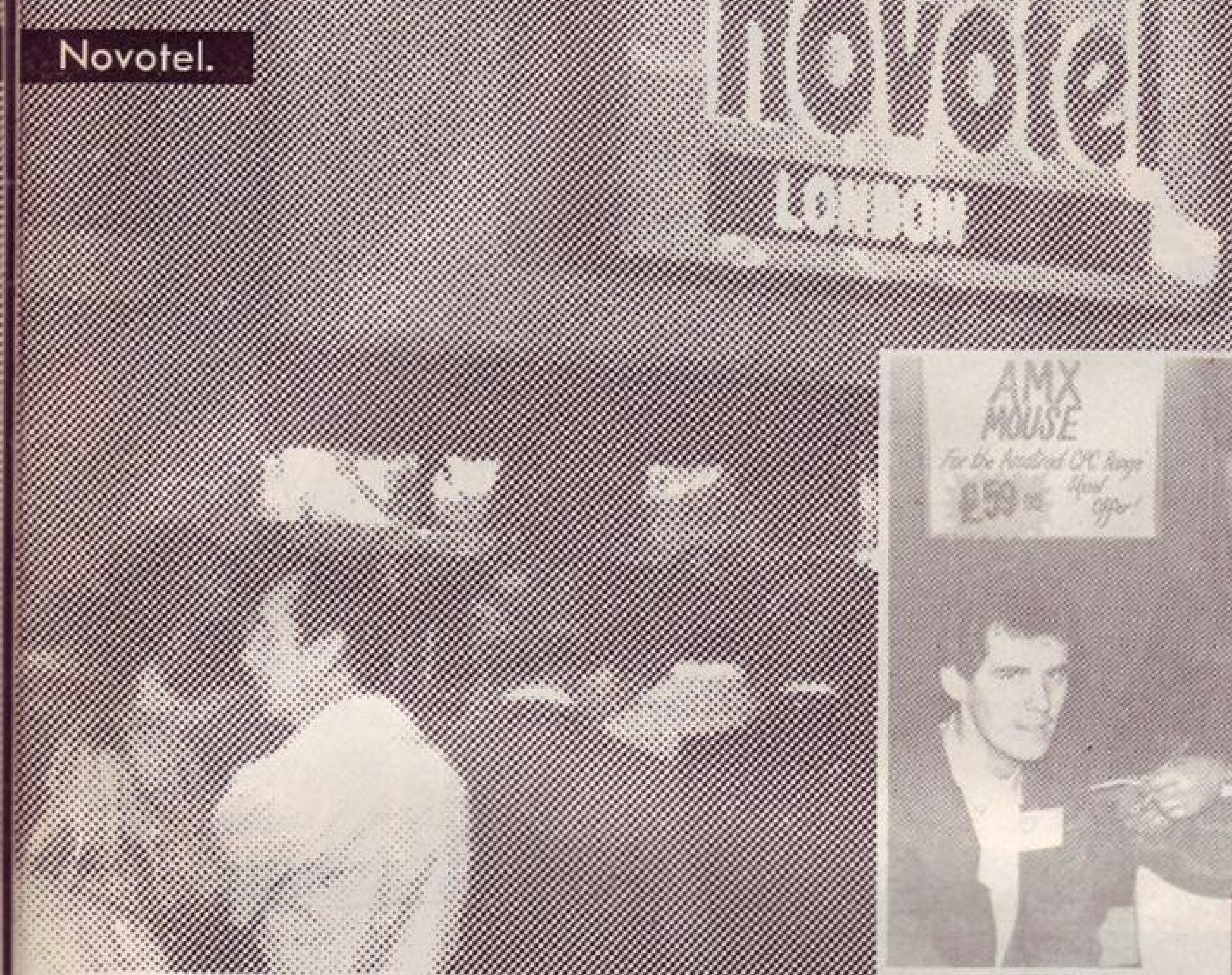
Serious software abounded. **Sagesoft's** stand displayed their latest database, and telecommunications software – *Chit Chat* – for the 6128 and 8256. **NewStar** had a similarly wide range of programs, including *NewWord* and *Flexifile*, a database. Other familiar names exhibiting included **Arnor, DK Tronics** and **Hisoft**, who had a new compiler/editor, *Pascal80*, for sale. **Camsoft** had a range of software available for the small business including sales ledgers, invoicing and payroll systems and a database.

Well, something for everyone. And, of course, the Amstrad Action stand, where the full complement of Pete, Chris, Bob, Di, Trev and George was on hand to meet the readers, answer questions, sell back issues and demonstrate the Christmas gift games *Kung Fu* and *Number 1*. We had a great time meeting you lot – we just hope you feel the same about us.

Amstrad's Roland Perry, the man who scrambled his name to give you Arnold, demonstrates his latest technological advance – the hat.



on!



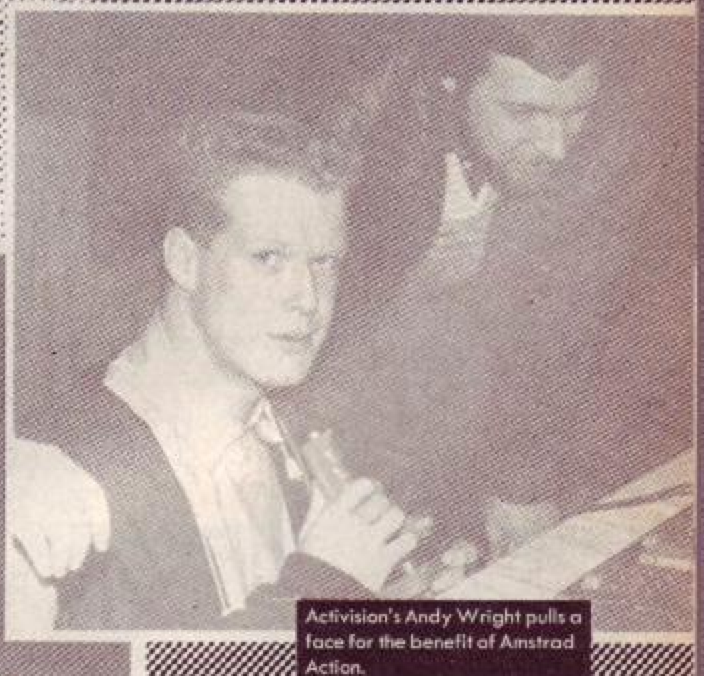
Novotel.



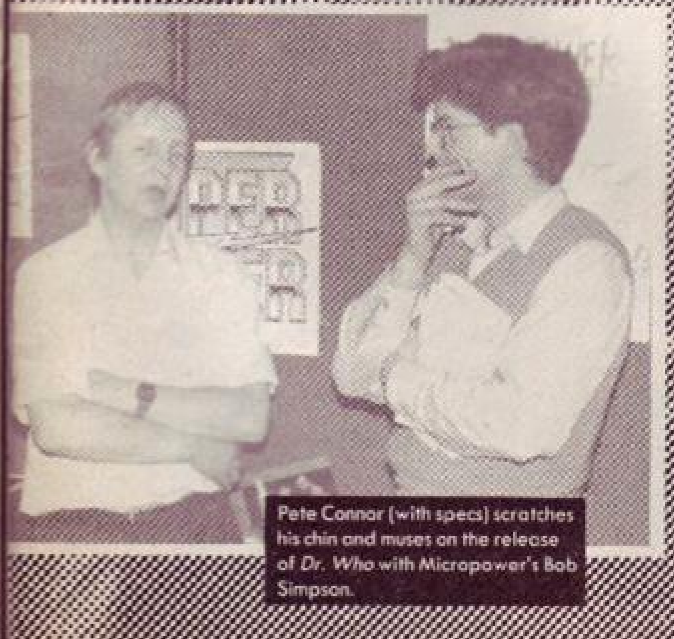
This is the bunch that made the Mouse run. The AMX Mouse, that is. Cygnet Computer Consultants – Jay Savoor (in specs) and Gary Allen (left) – rest on their laurels. In the middle, Gerard Richardson of AMS.



An intruding hand above the Vortex 20Mb hard disk (left) and the 1.4Mb floppy disc station.



Activision's Andy Wright pulls a face for the benefit of Amstrad Action.



Pete Connor (with specs) scratches his chin and muses on the release of *Dr. Who* with Micropower's Bob Simpson.



Alison Beesley of Mastertronic clutches the mag with the mostest. Don't worry – it's not going up to £1.99.



Three visitors who just couldn't tear themselves away from those Amstrad Actions.



Simon Beesley of Woolf Graphics demonstrates *The Animator* to an interested party.



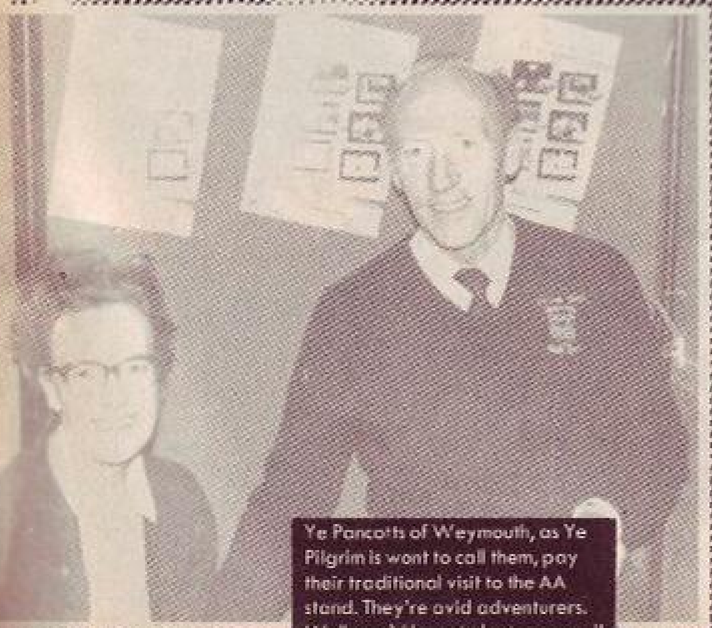
Mirrorsoft's Pat Bitton. Why is she looking so pleased?



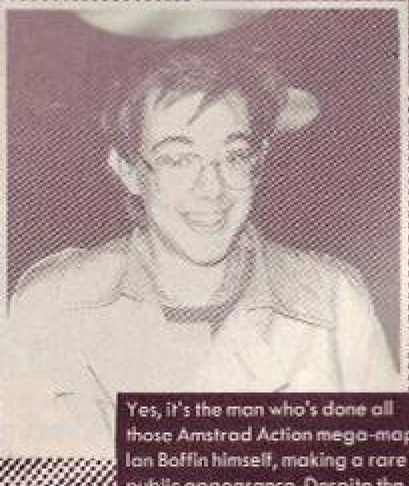
Mark Bergen, the German boffin behind the impressive range of Vortex add-ons.



Bill Poel of New Star with, secon from right, Jose Luis Dominguez Indesdcomp, Spanish distributo of El Arnaldo.



Ye Pancotts of Weymouth, as Ye Pilgrim is wont to call them, pay their traditional visit to the AA stand. They're avid adventurers. Well, you'd have to be to come all the way from Weymouth, wouldn't you?



Yes, it's the man who's done all those Amstrad Action mega-maps, Ian Boffin himself, making a rare public appearance. Despite the evidence of the raincoat, it wasn't raining *inside* the hall.

The Show moves to Manchester

Live oop north or in bonny Scotland? Fed up with everything happening in London? Well, relief is at hand. The next Amstrad Show is to be held in Manchester, at the New Century Hall, on March 22nd and 23rd, and will have somewhere in the region of 65 exhibitors.

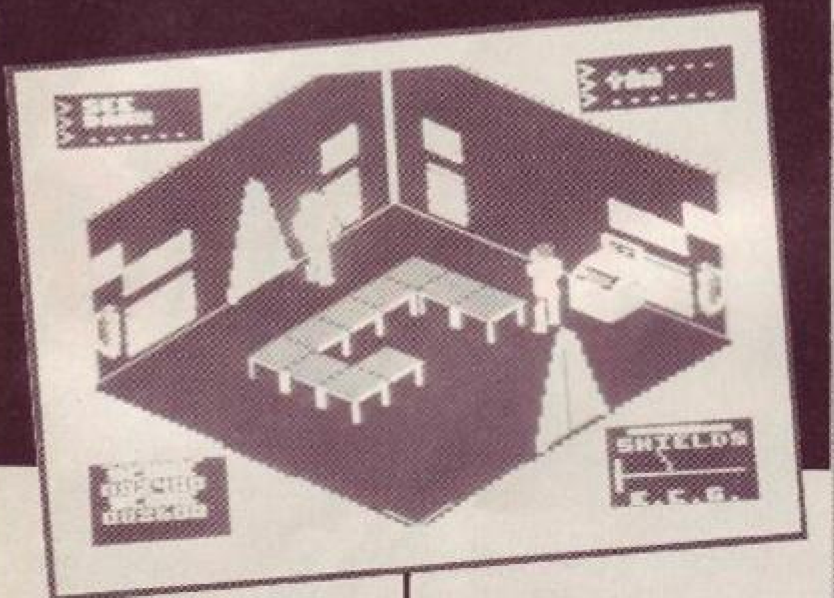
Future shows will include one at London's Novotel on May 31st and June 1st, and possibly another at the same location in the Autumn.

Mega *Meltdown*

Meltdown is destined to appear on your Arnold around the end of March, and Alligata are making some excited noises about it. They could have a point – the disc-based 128K version will have 192 rooms, *speech*, three major game tasks and 18 sub-tasks.

The scenario lands you on the moon, the only human in the Star Wars HQ. The reactor's unstable and the computer's gone bonkers. Naturally, you have to sort the mess out.

Cassette owners will have to make do with a version of the game containing 64 rooms and minus speech. *Meltdown* certainly sounds and looks – from pre-production photos – pretty impressive. It will cost £8.95 on cassette and £14.95 on disc.



Gremlin Discovery

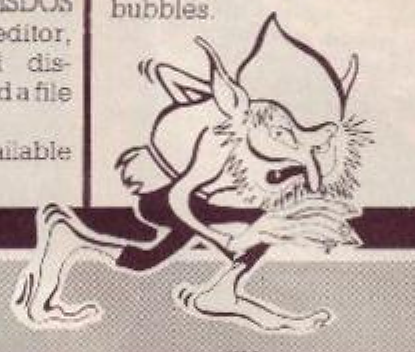
Gremlin Graphics have launched a new label, Discovery, for utilities. First release on the label is *Pyradev*, a disc-only developement system for the 464, 664 and 6128.

The five programs on *Pyradev* operate under AMSDOS and consist of a source file editor, assembler, monitor and disassembler, a disc-nurse and a file management utility.

Pyradev should be available now and costs £29.95.

AIRO?

Rumour has it that this is the name that Amstrad's boffins are calling the IBM compatible they're working on. It stands for *Another IBM Rip Off*. Seems a bit harsh really. Let's just hope it's not going to be the first computer with air bubbles.

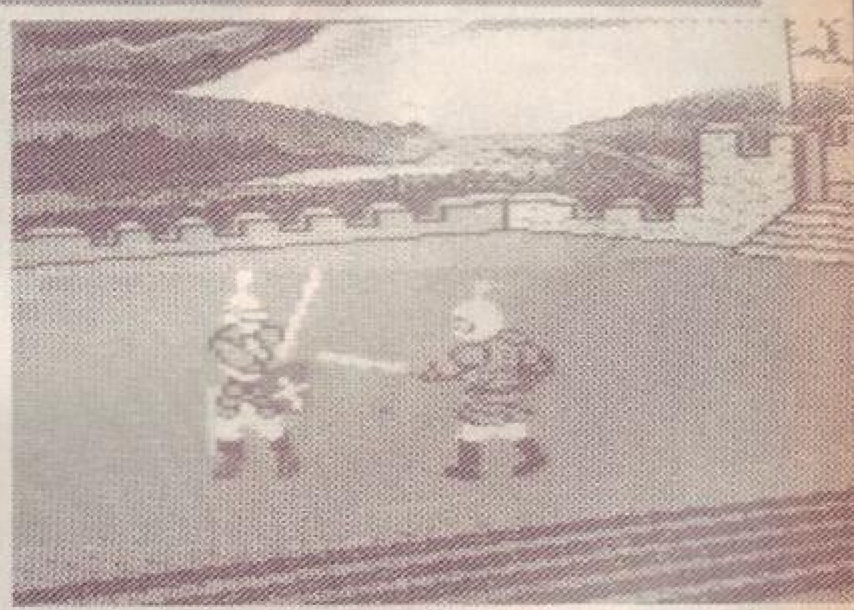


Amstrad English

Not a new language, but yet another company won over to producing software for the Arnold. And they're bringing out what looks like some very entertaining stuff.

Knight Games is a medieval combat game with eight different events including the fearsome-sounding Quartertstaff Bashing and Ball and Chain Flailing. The games will have a two-player option, 'medieval music' and, if the screen shots are anything to go by, some excellent graphics.

Also coming very shortly from English Software is the Amstrad version of *Elektraglide*, a high-speed road racing game with what should be some attractive graphics and music. Both games will cost £8.95 on cassette.



Alan wins Rita

Yes, he's done it! Alan Sugar has been named 'Personality of the Year' at the RITA awards. What or who is Rita? Why, it's the *Recognition of Information Technology Achievement*, an award decided by a panel of Ian McNaught-Davis of BBC's *Microlive*, David Firnbergh of The British Cmputer Society and Dr. Douglas Eyeions of the Computer Services Association. We've heard of the first one, but the other two are a couple of dark horses.

Still, Alan deserves it, doesn't he? (Don't answer that if you're a 664 owner). He's done us proud in '85 with a stream of ace machines. It's got to be a knighthood, *at least*, this year.



Disc drought

Britain is experiencing an acute shortage of 3 inch discs, a shortage so bad that many software houses just can't satisfy demand for disc-based software.

For the user wanting blank discs, things are just as bad. Boots are charging £5.95 for a single disc – if they've got them in stock – while a five-disc pack will set you back £19.99 at Dixons. Mail order is cheaper, but you'd better make sure they've got some before you order.

The problem seems to be that manufacturers of the discs – the Japanese giants Panasonic and Maxell – didn't reckon with the tremendous success the of the Amstrad machines last Autumn. Demand for discs now far outstrips supply.

Help, though, is at hand. A spokesman for Panasonic Industrial UK Ltd said that the company's production is now being increased from 500,000 in January to 1,000,000 per month by April. 'Our target', he said, 'is 1.4 million by May or June'. He also added that he saw 'no reason for a high price in the market place.'

It seems, too, that the strength of the Amstrad computers is about to tempt other manufacturers into the production of 3 inch discs. By Spring or Summer, then, the situation should be much healthier. But things will be tough until then.

Elite's arcade action

Elite Systems should soon have Amstrad versions of several ace arcade games available. Expected first is *Commando*, already at the top of Spectrum and Commodore charts. It's to be followed by *Bomb Jack*, *Roller Coaster* and, a little later, *Ghosts and Goblins*. All the games will cost £8.95 on tape and £14.95 on disc.

Amstrad Customer Service

Having trouble getting through to Amstrad when you need help? Things may be a little easier now, since Amstrad have announced a new Customer Service number **0277 230222**.

Database proudly presents.

Some of the features of the new Mini Office II

With the word processor you can ...
★ Select most features by menu or embedded commands. ★ Transfer records from database for personalised circulars. ★ Choose from three methods of display: 20 column (double size characters), 40 column, 80 column. ★ Centre, indent, tab, justify and merge text. ★ Insert, copy, move or delete blocks of text. ★ Select two editing modes: insert or overwrite. ★ Search and replace globally or selectively. ☆ Check typing speed in words per minute. ☆ See on-screen real-time clock, plus word and character count.

With the database you can ...
★ Select five field types (Alpha, Decimal, Date, Integer, Formula). ★ Perform all arithmetic functions. ★ Search over multiple fields. ★ Mark individual records. ★ Use flexible printout routine. ★ Pass records to the word processor. ☆ Carry out powerful multi-field record sorting.

With the spreadsheet you can ...
★ Total rows and columns, with easy selection of criteria. ★ Copy formulae either absolutely or relatively. ★ Print out all or part of the spreadsheet. ★ Move directly to a specific location. ★ Select movement of cursor. ☆ Recalculate automatically or manually.

With the label printer you can ...
★ Design any style of label with the versatile editor. ★ Select label size and sheet format. ★ Read directly from database files.

With the graphics pack you can ...
★ Enter data directly or take from spreadsheet. ★ Use icon type menus. ☆ Choose pie chart, bar chart or line graph. ★ Display up to three line graphs simultaneously. ★ Display up to three bar charts side by side or stacked. ★ Choose bar charts in either 2D or 3D. ★ Draw compacted or emphasised pie charts. ★ Define your own style of shading. ★ Dump graphs directly to Amstrad or Epson compatible printer.

With the comms pack you can ...
★ Access MicoLink or Telecom Gold with only two key presses. ★ Select protocols as required. ★ Change modes while on-line. ★ Store text directly to memory or disc. ★ Use one-key 'Stop' command.

With all the modules you can ...
★ Use the AMX Mouse. ★ Choose foreground and background colour in most modes. ★ Make more efficient use of memory and faster response time thanks to machine code content.

☆ **Features that were not in the original Mini Office.**

When it was launched in October, 1984, Mini Office was acclaimed as the most innovative software of the decade, creating new standards in serious programming – and at a price everyone could afford.

Since then it has become far and away one of the best-selling packages ever created for the home computer, frequently displacing games from their position in the Top Ten. And, unlike most software releases, it is still as much in demand now as it was 15 months ago.

Which is why there has been so much speculation throughout the industry about what the much-rumoured Mini Office II would be like. After all, how do you beat a best-seller?

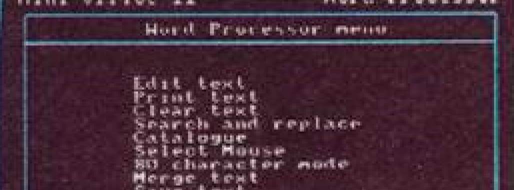
The answer is – by making it even better! And the new Mini Office II is certainly that ... in every respect.

While still retaining upward compatibility with the original Mini Office, it is packed with a host of new features that have been made possible by the tremendous strides made in programming techniques in the last 12 months.

The result is the most comprehensive suite of business programs ever produced for the Amstrad – and still the best value ever.

And it comes with a no-nonsense easy-to-follow guide to business computing that will take you step by step through all the many features, showing you how to use their huge potential to the full.

It's a word processor ...



It's a database ...



It's a spreadsheet ...



It's MINI OFFICE II on the Amstrad 464, 664 and 6128

Software

Please send me Mini Office II

Cassette £14.95 6086☐

3" disc £19.95 6087☐

I wish to pay by

☐ Cheque made payable to Database Publications Ltd.

☐ Visa

☐ Access ____ Expiry date __/__

Name ____ Signed ____

Address ____

Post to: Database Publications, 68 Chester Road, Hazel Grove, Stockport SK7 5NY. AA



It's a graphics pack . . .



It's a comms pack . . .



It's a label printer . . .



All 6 modules for £14.95 (cassette), £19.95 (3" disc)

Databases
Can they really sort you out?

Good ol' Bertram Carrot takes a long hard look at the programs that try to bring order to the chaos of your filing system.

Most of us exist in the midst of muddle. Information – *valuable* information – is 'stored' on scraps of paper and 'filed' in trouser pockets and overstuffed drawers. 'Data retrieval' means spending half an hour emptying the rubbish bins to find that essential address.

Some people, of course, are a little more organised. Boxes full of cards and books full of addresses testify to their efficiency. It only takes *them* a quarter of an hour to find the missing info.

Is there a better way? Can a database save you time and cut down on worry? Bertram Carrot's fearless investigation will help you decide.

For the record

How many times have you wished you could find the address book which you're sure you left on your desk? Or wanted to add details to a record or tape catalogue without disturbing all the others? The computer database helps with both these problems, and with many others besides.

In the home, the uses of a database are usually connected with hobbies. Anything involving cataloguing is a prime target, so collections of stamps, photographs, records, beermats or African beetles can all be indexed and recorded in a database. You can then break down your collection into useful categories. You might, for instance, want to keep separate lists of your records by artist and by title, or to sort your beetles by length of antennae or wingspan.

If you belong to a club or society you might be able to help out the Secretary (especially if he's you!) by entering the membership records onto a database. Any notices of meetings or a programme of events can then be mailed to everbody by producing a set of envelope labels directly from the database. Bear in mind, though, that the new information protection laws require you to let all your members know that you're going to keep computer records of them, and to get their permission.

Databases really come into their own when you use your Amstrad in business. You can still keep a mailing list of customers or clients (although you may have to register it with the data protection office), but there are several other applications which can also help you out. If you're a small shopkeeper or an African beetle dealer, you'll have a number of items of stock that you'll want to keep on your shelves. If you run out you may lose sales or be unable to continue manufacture of your product.

Various other applications also suggest themselves. An Estate Agent can keep lists of all available properties on computer so he can search through them quickly. He can then supply prospective buyers with a a list of houses in their price range and area. I know of a professional astrologer who keeps standard paragraphs of text on a database and selects them as reminders when he produces a forecast for a client. Each paragraph is tied to particular aspects of the stars.

What is it?

So far, the database has just been a hazy idea. But what is it? In its simplest form, a database is a computerised card index. Anything you might enter on a card in such an index can also be entered on one *record* of a database file. This might be details of a particular house or beetle, or the stock level of a component. Each detail, e.g. a person's name or address, would be put written in a particular place on the record card. This is also true of the computerised record, and each piece of information is put in a separate *field* on the record.

If you keep a card index, you probably keep all your paper cards in a cardbox to keep them together. In a database you keep all your records in a *file*. This file is saved to disc just as a program or piece of text is saved from a word processor. The same database program can work with many different data files.

Storing all your records on a 3 inch disc may save a bit of space, but the real benefits of a database come from your Amstrad's ability to search and sort the information much more quickly than you can do manually.

Most databases will be able to sort your file by several *key*-fields. This means, for instance, that you could have a file sorted by surname as the first key, and use forename as a second key to sort records of people with the same surname. You might also want to sort the same file, perhaps by address, for some other purpose. You can re-sort it to produce a printed list, while still leaving the records in

```
BEEBUGSOFT ULTRABASE
Filename:PEOPLE1                    Record: 1
---------------------------------------------------
          FIELD                     DATA

1         Title & Initials          Dr. A.G
2         Surname                   Andrews
3         Address 1                 42 High Street
4         Address 2                 Computertown
5         Address 3                 Cleveland
6         Sex                       M
7         Date of Birth             211004
8         Number of Children        1
9.        Height (in metres)        1.7
---------------------------------------------------
```

their original order in your file.

If you want to trace a particular card within a card index, you have to look through them all to find the one you want. With a database, you can get your micro to do it for you. You can pick out, for example, all the beetles found in Lisoto, with green carapaces and costing more than 4.00. You can define complex rules by which to search your file, and these rules may include *wildcards*.

A wildcard is much like the joker in a card game, and may act as any single character, or group of characters. This means that if you want to search your file for anybody whose surname begins with Smith you could use a wildcard at the end of the name (perhaps Smith£), and the program would then find Smith, Smithy, Smithson and Smith-Robinson.

What to look for

There are many different ways of writing a database program,and this is reflected in the eight databases in the following survey. Some run under AMSDOS, others under CP/M, some store all their records in memory at one time, while others call each from disc as it's needed.

The facilities they offer and sophistication of data handlingarenormally reflected in their price, so it's important to work out exactly how you want to use a database before making a choice. Decide how many records you'll need to store (making a generous allowance for expansion), which facilities will be most useful to you and which you can do without. Check out things like printer options and whether the program can work with more than one disc. A database can be an essential application for a micro and forms the third member of the business program 'big three', with the word processor and spreadsheet.

RANDOM ACCESS DATABASE

Minerva Systems, £29.95 disc
CPC 464, 664, 6128

Minerva is a new software house, specialising in database systems for micros, and their random access database for the Amstrad introduces several novel ideas. The prototype reviewed here still lacks the code for several key areas of operation, such as sorting and searching the database, so I'll comment only on the specification for these routines. The finished product should be available very soon after you read this.

There are two types of filing systems available for databases. **Sequential** filing means that a program can only read each record in sequence, one after the other, as with a cassette tape. This is the system supported by AMSDOS, which in many ways is like a speedy tape-filing system **Random Access** filing, however (normally reserved for CP/M programs), allows a program to move to any disc record directly and load it into memory.

The Minerva program combines the best of both these worlds, by using random access from within BASIC. This is done using a series of machine-code extensions to BASIC, which handle the random access bits. Why not write the whole program under CP/M then? Well if your program works under BASIC, you can use all of the routines already in the BASIC ROM. The Minerva system can therefore offer all the calculation facilities of BASIC, with very little extra programming.

The database is very user-friendly and splits off the creation of a file from its use. The format of the screen is completely independent of the data on the file. This means you can design as many different displays, form letters or address labels as you want, and call any of them into play to use with your file. You can even use the same formats with more than one set of data.

The program works in mode 2, but Minerva have written routines to produce double width (40 column) characters at any point in the display. This means that you can define the major parts of your record in 40 columns and add notes etc in 80 columns. This double standard extends to printouts, which make use of condensed mode to copy the screen display.

The search routine is said to be very fast, finding any record in a couple of seconds, even in a large file. The result of a search can be kept as a sub-set of the complete file, and dealt with independently.

The Minerva system should be a very versatile product at a reasonable price. I hear rumours that the random access file handling extensions may later be released on their own. Let's hope so.

G O O D N E W S

- True random access from AMSDOS
- Full BASIC calculation facilities
- Dual mode 40/80 column displays

B A D N E W S

- Couldn't check sort, search or maths routines

MASTERFILE/MASTERFILE 128

Amsoft/Campbell Systems for 464/664 £26.25 cass/£29.95 disc for 6128 £34.90 disc only

Masterfile was one of the first database programs available for the Amstrad micros, and still holds up quite well against the full CP/M offerings. *Masterfile 128* is a revised and improved version of the original, and although only available direct from Campbell at present, it will soon be added to the 464/664 version available from Amsoft.

This database is **relational**, which means you can call up details of a record on one file by referring to a related record on another. The uses of this facility may not at first be obvious. Take an example, though. If you were keeping an index of books on a *Masterfile* database, you might have ten by Russell Hoban.Each book record would have to have the full author's name against its title, and you would therefore have the letters 'Russell Hoban' on your file 10 times. Multiply this by all the other authors whose books you like, and you should see you're wasting quite a bit of space.

NAME/TEL/ADDRESS SUMMARY

AMSOFT Ltd	0277 230222	Brentwood House 169 Kings Road Brentwood Essex CM14 4EF
Dr W Burford	0902 76543	"White Towers" Sandstone Hill Wolverhampton W Midlands *
Campbell Software Design Ltd	01 508 5058	57 Trap's Hill Loughton Essex IG10 1TD England
Mrs F Featherstone-Smythe	0602 499310	The Manor House Watersweet Lane Heanor Notts NG3 0KJ *
Mr S T Ferguson	0493 45661	68 Station Way Ferndown Gt Yarmouth Norfolk *
James Kelly	---	11 Sussex Gardens Croydon Surrey CR22 5EA *

Fictional data:*

...more...(H to see menu options)

File: FILE1 Records:0011 Selected:0010 Parents:0001 RAM used:02K from 64K

Masterfile, however, allows you to set up a **parent** file with all the authors' names on it and to use two-character references to link them to **child** records on a different file, which have details of all the book titles. You can still refer to the child file if you want to deal with your books by title.

The program can sort a file and search through it using a system of selecting and de-selecting records. You can therefore create any subset you like by flagging only the records you want to keep on file. You can't save a sub-set, though.

You can keep totals of fields in a *Masterfile* file, but you can't perform any other calculations on numeric data. Against this, you can freely design your record screen and put in frames and dividers at will, by selecting from a series of menus. This isn't quite as easy as designing a record on screen, but the finished record can look very effective. Overall, *Masterfile* is an effective database, but is perhaps not the easiest to get to grips with.

G O O D N E W S

- 'Relational' database supports parent/child files
- Comprehensive screen formatting

▶ *Masterfile 128* **allows manipulation of records from BASIC**

B A D N E W S

▶ **Memory-based, so not suitable for very large files**
▶ **Quite complex to use well**

ULTRABASE

Beebugsoft, £16.95 cass, £17.95 disc
CPC 464, 664, 6128

Ultrabase loads all the records on your file into memory when you start to use it, and holds them here until you resave the file at the end of the session. This system has the advantage of making searches and sorts faster than with disc-based programs, but also restricts the amount of data you can hold. *Ultrabase* doesn't make use of the banked memory on the 6128, either, so the extra 64K goes to waste.

To set up an *Ultrabase* file you specify the type, length and title of each field in your record. A field can be of String, Integer or Numeric type, as with variables in BASIC, and the length should be generous. Don't forget 'Peregrine Smythe-Winterbottom' when choosing the length of a name field!

Once you've defined the fields on your record you can enter the data. The *Ultrabase* record card is in a fixed format with all the field titles down the left-hand side of the screen and their contents down the right. This makes it easier for the program, but doesn't aid readability much.

You can search and sort your file by selecting options from *Ultrabase's* main menu, but the program can't hold subsets of the complete file;you can only print them out. You can print lists of records, and specify which fields from each record will be included, or print screen copies.

Ultrabase is a conversion of an earlier Beebugsoft program, written for the BBC Micro several years ago. Home computer programs have advanced some way since then, and this one shows its age. The manual doesn't tie up with what you see on the screen, either. For example, two fields in the demonstration file should be titled No of Child and Ht (m), but on the screen they appear as 'Number of' and 'Height (in). Presumably the boys at Beebugsoft know some very short people!

G O O D N E W S

▶ **Fast sorts and searches, as data is all in memory**
▶ **Easy to use**
▶ **Cheap**

B A D N E W S

▶ **Limited space for data (roughly 300 records)**
▶ **Fixed record format**
▶ **Demo file and manual have mistakes**

FLEXIFILE

Saxon Software, £39.95 disc
CPC 6128, PCW8256

Flexifile gives the appearance of a database which has been shoe-horned into the CPC6128. Although the PCW8256 will give it plenty of room, the 6128's banked memory is barely sufficient to run it. *Flexifile* uses 11 overlays (sections of program which are loaded from disc when needed). There is over 100K of code involved in the program, which doesn't leave you much disc space for data. You can split the main part of the program onto a second disc, but you will still need all the overlays on every data disc you use.

The program is heavily menu-based. Everything you do within it involves trips down a 'tree' of different menus, each leading to the next level down. This can be quite confusing to start with,though it does prevent you having to learn Control sequences, as with *WordStar*, for instance.

Setting up a new database requires you to set up your passwords and maths constants before defining your field types, lengths and code names. Each code name defines a field to the program and must be four letters long, with at least two capitals. The field description can be much longer, and it is this description which appears on the record card. The simple, six-field, instructional database described in the manual produces a file description (stored on your data disc) which is over 19K long. That's before you add any data!

The manual is a topsy-turvy affair, where interesting bits of information, such as how to get the keys to respond, are left till after the tutorial section which uses them. It's printed in blue on blue, to stop photocopying, but is patchy with very small print.

Once you've defined your file you can perform calculations between numeric fields by defining formulae which apply to them. This is where the constants come in. You can, for instance, define one field as the product of another and the current VAT rate. If the VAT rate is stored as a system constant, you can change it at any time and *Flexifile* will recalculate through the file automatically. Very handy.

You can't sort a *Flexifile* database, although the manual claims this is unnecessary as new entries are always put into their correct place according to any number of 'key' fields. Unfortunately, this process is never explained.

You can select certain records from a *Flexifile* database to form a 'selection' (subset). The manual goes into a confusing description of 'quarters' and 'lines' which does little to explain how you create a selection.

Flexifile can't really be recommended, and, due to operational problems with the 6128 version (attributed by Saxon to a hardware problem) this version may well be dropped. Although the database is quite powerful, it is not easy to use and, for any but the experienced database user, could prove a considerable headache.

G O O D N E W S

▶ **Cheap for a CP/M database**
▶ **Size restricted by disc capacity, not memory**
▶ **2 level password protection**

B A D N E W S

▶ **Can't conveniently use it on the 6128 with a single drive**
▶ **Tortuous set-up procedure**
▶ **Poor manual**

Table of

	464 664 6128 8256	Disc or memory	Max no. of recs.	No. fields/ Field length	Free forma[t] Redefine?
Ultrabase	X X X O	Memo	300 av.	15/25	no/yes
Minerva	X X X O	Disc	6000	40/255	yes/yes
Masterfile	X X X O	Memo	600/1200	?/240	yes/yes
Flexifile	O O X X	Disc	65536	20/80	yes/yes
Sage	O O X X	Disc	n/a	n/a	yes/yes
Cardbox	O O X X	Disc	65500	26/1404	yes/yes



POPULAR DATABASE

Sagesoft, £69.99 disc
CPC6128, PCW8256

Sagesoft's program is a professional database which will cope with most things that might be thrown at it in a small business. It's a full CP/M program using random access files held on disc, and offers an easy to use query language much like you might use in playing an adventure. More of this later.

To set up the database you will first need to prepare a working disc from the master supplied. The main program and its overlays take up so much room that you can't add your .EMS file to the disc to make a bootable working copy, which is a shame. You'll have to load CP/M from a separate disc and then load the Sage database from there.

Defining a file is quite an awkward business which requires you to answer a number of questions about the format of each field in the record. You even have to stipulate the row and column start positions for each field. It's best to plot your record out on a piece of graph paper. A pity Sage couldn't have designed their program to let you see the record as it's built up.

Once you've got some records on your file the really 'fun' part of the Sage database comes into its own. Rather than having different options for searching, sorting and printing your data, Sage's database lets you give it commands, using a simplified set of English words. For instance, if you want to produce a sorted list of names and addresses from a file called 'ADDLIST' with field names 'NAME', 'ADDRESS', 'TOWN' and 'TELEPHONE', you could give the command 'list addlist by name showing name address town telephone'. To print the same list you could change 'list' to 'print' or add 'on ptr' to the end of the command. The whole system is very easy to use.

Also included in the package is a text processor for producing form letters from your files. This is more than a make-weight and allows you to write quite complex letters or reports, inserting information from a file into each.

The Sage database is very powerful and friendly, but it's a pity the setting up procedure isn't as friendly as the rest of it.

G O O D N E W S

- ▶ **Near English query language**
- ▶ **Text editor utility for mail merge**
- ▶ **Clear manual**

B A D N E W S

- ▶ **No on-screen record design**
- ▶ **Programs too long to make bootable work disc**

CARDBOX

Caxton Software, £99.99 disc
CPC6128, PCW8256

As its name suggests, *Cardbox* sets out to be an electronic equivalent of a box of file cards. As such, it doesn't go in for any calculations on the data in your file, but does provide comprehensive search facilities.

To set up a *Cardbox* file, you position a cursor on-screen and define the characteristics of each field from there, so you can see the card as it's built up. A menu of different options along the bottom of the screen, together with a number of prompts,ensure that you know what's going on all the time. The record card can be quite large, and you can incorporate simple graphics using punctuation characters.

Once you've defined your card and entered your data, you can use *Cardbox's* versatile selection system to search through it. You can select any field from your record, and pull out cards which have a particular entry ('London' in the 'Town' field, for instance). These cards are then copied to a new 'level', which is effectively a sub-set of the whole file.

You can make a further selection from this level, using a different field and contents, and moving up another level. And so on. You can refine your selection up to 99 times, to ensure you eventually arrive at just the records you want. If you forget what rules you used earlier on, *Cardbox* will display a history for you, and of course you can switch to any of the previous levels and view the cards there.

There's no sort routine in *Cardbox*, although there is one in the later *Cardbox-Plus*. Why Caxton chose to provide Amstrad Users with the earlier program is a puzzle. Perhaps they didn't like to reduce the price of the newer product to an 'Amstrad' level.

You can print out the screen at any stage or produce a list of cards using any alternative format you care to define.

Cardbox is a well-written program ideal as a replacement for a manual card box. If you don't need extra features, particularly calculations, then you'll find it versatile and easy to use.

G O O D N E W S

- ▶ **Very easy to use**
- ▶ **Can hold a file of up to 8 Megabytes!**
- ▶ **Very comprehensive search facilities**

B A D N E W S

- ▶ **Old version. *Cardbox-Plus* has more facilities**
- ▶ **No sort routine**

features

Search?/ No. subsets	Sort?	Print facilities	Maths facilities	Special features
yes/0	✓	Card dump & sel list	Totals only	'Fuzzy' search
yes/1	✓	Unlimited formats	As BASIC	40/80 column text
yes/1	✓	Card dump & sel list	Totals only	Relational User BASIC
yes/4	X	8 main formats	+ -*, Mean SD, Var, Max	Passwords, Templates
yes/0	✓	Unlimited formats	+ -*, and Totals	Query language
yes/99	X	Card dump & sel list	None	99 levels of subsets

The verdict

As you can see, there's a wide variety of database programs on the market. At the lower end come simple programs which are suitable for beetle collections and membership lists, while at the top of the range are databases which can handle very large files with sophisticated data handling techniques.

In the sub £50.00 bracket, the Minerva database seems sufficiently flexible for a lot of useful work. This assumes the finished product is fully up to the published spec., though. If you're in a hurry, *Masterfile 128* is a more-than-sound AMSDOS database.

Above £50.00, both the Sage Database and *Cardbox* will do the job well, with my vote going to Sage by a short head for its extra facilities.

Vortex
the add-on to remember

OK, so you've been frothing at the mouth at the thought of one of those DK'Tronics memory expansions – acres of RAM stuck onto the back of your Arnold giving you 64, 128, even 256K extra space for your programs...but hold it right there! A German company called Vortex have brought out a RAM expansion board to end all boards. Steve Cooke has just shoved one inside his 464 and reckons that, if it's extra K you're after, this one's the Kaiser of them all...

The Vortex boards come in various different configurations, but each board offers at least three main features.

First, you get extra space for your programs. However, and this is a real bonus, unlike some other memory expansions we could mention, the extra space provided by the Vortex board is REALLY useful – even to BASIC programmers. Depending on the size of the board, you get up to nine 32K blocks of extra RAM, each of which can be used to store BASIC programs.

You can even use different blocks to hold entirely unrelated programs, and then jump from one block to another, running each program in turn if you so desired. Special software (supplied either on ROM or cassette) provides a range of RSXs to manipulate memory and control the flow of your extended BASIC programs. This is a big advantage over other expansion boards which do not allow you to use extra RAM for BASIC program storage unless you're *extremely* clever.

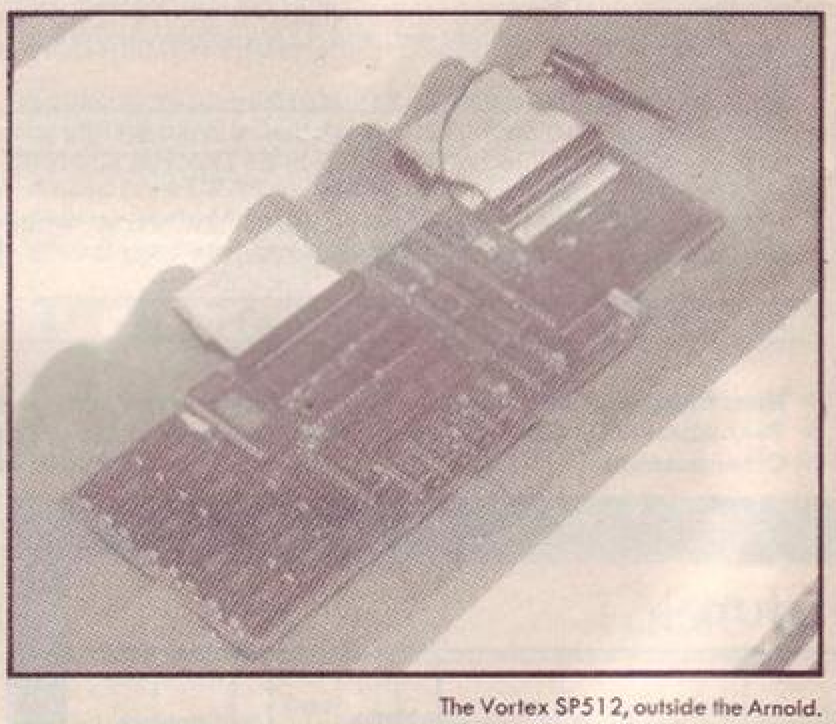
Next, you get a 60K program area for CP/M and special software that allows you to patch your CP/M system disc to make use of the extra memory. The system is CP/M compatible and allows you to run programs like *dBase*, full-spec *WordStar*, and other CP/M heavies that would never squeeze into the normal 464 CP/M set-up.

Finally, all the boards offer a 32K printer buffer that automatically spools data to your printer while you get on with something else. 32K means about 16 pages of A4 listing, so this can be a real bonus if you're developing lengthy BASIC programs – and if you're not, you soon will be with all that extra RAM!

However, that's not the end of the story by any means. As you move up through the different options available from Vortex, you get RAM floppies (up to 448K in size!!) as well. Anyone who's ever used a PCW 8256 with its Drive M (for Memory) will know how much using a RAM-disc can speed up programs that would otherwise take ages loading in menus, prompts, and other messages from disc. *WordStar* is, of course, the prime example of a program that really benefits from using RAM-discs, and there are many others.

Apart from the massive specs of the Vortex boards, the other big advantage they have is that they are fitted INSIDE your Arnold, and don't hang off the back, getting tangled up with your RS232 interface, ROM expansion board, Communications pack, monitor/power leads, disc interface, and printer cable. Yes, quite a list isn't it? One of Arnold's great strengths is that he just cries out for expansion. But let's face it – there's a limit to how much you can have coming out of his *derrière*, and the Vortex boards are somehow all the more impressive for being quite invisible. Remember, though, that fiddling around with Arnold's insides will invalidate your guarantee.

After all this, it's no surprise that when asked to review the boards for Amstrad Action I went all out for the top-of-the-range SP-512. However, all the boards are broadly similar in operation and we've printed a chart showing the different configurations and features of each model.



The Vortex SP512, outside the Arnold.

Getting Started

The first reassuring bit of news is that the board is very easy to fit, provided you know one end of a screwdriver from another. All you do is unscrew your faithful friend's casing screws, separate the mouldings, and whip out a couple of chips. You then shove these into specially prepared sockets on the Vortex board, plug it in, and screw everything back up again.

It may sound risky, but for once I have to take my hat off to a manufacturer who's really taken trouble with the manual. The procedure is described in absolutely fool-proof terms, and if you get the screws out and then find yourself getting confused then all I can say is that your screws must be even looser than the computers.

Once you've got the thing installed, you can then use the software supplied on cassette to 'patch' your CP/M disc (if you've got a disc drive) so that it can make use of the extra memory. There are in fact some areas of incompatibility here – the effect of increasing the CP/M memory space is to interfere slightly with some of the internal mechanics of the CP/M system. The Vortex software enables most of these to be overcome, but some of the CP/M utilities, such as DDT, can cause problems if you try to use them with the extra RAM paged in. Most normal applications will not be affected,

however.

The best thing about the CP/M software is how easy it is to use. Most of us spend our lives trying not to understand things like SYSGEN and MOVCPM, but the Vortex manual actually takes you throughthe whole process step by step, even including screenshots of the different prompts! By the time you've finished, you've created a new CP/M system disc that can make full use of all that gorgeous memory.

Amstrad Mega-BASIC!

The real joy of the Vortex boards for most people will be the way it enhances BASIC programming. The BASIC operating software is supplied on ROM with all the boards except the SP64/M (which has it on cassette) and provides a whopping 37 extra commands. In fact, it's this side of the package that impressed me most and I reckon that the BOS software (as Vortex call it) is nothing short of miraculous.

The fact is that I already own a 256K memory expansion board, but I think anyone else who's got one will understand why it spends all its time in the cupboard instead of being plugged into Arnold. Truth to tell, it's really not that useful because the only thing I can use it for in BASIC is data-storage. What I *can't* do is write 256K long BASIC programs.

But I can with the Vortex board. Even better, I can have **nine completely different** BASIC programs, each up to 32K long, resident in memory **simultaneously**. It's all done using a set of RSXs which include |GOTO,bank number,line number; |GOSUB,bank number, line number; and |RETURN. These three little gems allow you to call BASIC routines in different banks. What's more, using the |COMMON command, you can make them share variables – or not, as you decide.

Just to show you how one might use this, I could enter the following commands to store two short BASIC programs in memory simultaneously:

```
|BANK,1: REM Selects Bank number 1
10 PRINT "THIS PROGRAM IS STORED IN BANK NUMBER 1":
|RETURN
|BANK,5: REM Switch over to Bank 5, leaving the program in Bank
1
10 PRINT "THIS PROGRAM IS STORED IN BANK NUMBER 5":
|RETURN
|BANK,0: REM switch over to Bank 0,leaving both the previous
programs in memory
```

Now by entering |GOSUB,1,10: |GOSUB,5,10 I could call each of these mini-programs in turn. Since the |GOSUB command specifies the line number as well as the bank, you can see that programs in different banks can have the same line numbers without fear of clashing.

If you're into machine code, then there's an extended CALL command as well that operates in a similar way to |GOSUB, but allows you to pass parameters as well as specify which bank you're calling. You also get, as a special bonus, a built-in monitor with one-line assembly and all the usual monitor functions for manipulating and displaying memory.

Ramdisc

If you already have a disc system, then you can use the new transient command RAMDISC to format your extra memory just as you would format an ordinary disc. Using the RAMDISC, however, does reduce the amount of RAM available for BASIC, and you may prefer to use the system in 'pseudo-floppy mode', which means using the commands |RAMREAD, |RAMWRITE etc. In this mode, the Vortex board operates in a very similar fashion to other memory expansions and to the system used for swapping banks on the CPC6128.

The drive logs on under CP/M as drive C. I don't think I need say much about it, except that it's blindingly fast compared to the mechanical variety. You just have to make sure you don't switch off the machine before transferring your data onto a floppy!

Video Ram

I can't resist one last temptation to gloat over all you poor unfortunates who haven't got one of these boards. I can now (with the SP 512) store up to 17 different screens and then swap between them at will. Screen swapping takes about a third of a second, so that means I can't really animate screens, but it's still pretty quick.

Just to put the icing on the cake, you even get some extended graphics commands, such as |FRAME, which synchronises printing to the screen with the frame-flyback, thereby making your graphics entirely flicker-free. There's even an intriguing |FAST command, that speeds up screen output quite dramatically (though it can't be used with windows).

|GCHAR fetches a character value from the screen at a given co-ordinate; |GPAPER and GPEN select graphics background and foreground colours; |MASK and |UNMASK enables you to define a binary masking pattern for lines and points – not terribly useful as a rule but nice to have just in case.

Drawbacks

None. Or at least very few. The first annoyance is the variability of HIMEM. You may find yourself having to patch some of your BASIC or machine code programs to allow for the fact that HIMEM varies slightly according to whether Bank 0 or one of the other banks is switched in. If you use the extra memory to store screens, then HIMEM drops dramatically to 16360.

The other annoyances (and it really seems a bit much to call them that, considering what you get in return) are that SYMBOL AFTER doesn't work any more if you're working under BOS, and that there are some difficulties using CP/M with the extra memory, since the original Amstrad implementation doesn't expect so much memory. The Vortex software takes care of most of the incompatibility, but you may find the occasional program that trips over.

Expanded BASIC Commands

BANK BASIC BOS CALL
COMMON DEV FAST FRAME
GCHAR GOSUB GOTO GPAPER
GPEN ID LIST LOAD MASK MON
NEW PEEK POKE RAMCLOSE
RAMFIELD RAMOPEN RAMREAD
RAMWRITE RECORDS RETURN
RUN SAVE SCREEN.IN
SCREEN.OUT SCREENS SLOW
SPOOL.ON SPOOL.OFF
UNMASK VIDEO.ON VIDEO.OFF

Specifications

	SP64/M	SP64	SP128	SP256	SP320	SP512
Expandable	no	yes	yes	yes	yes	no
Space for Basic	64K	64K	96K	160K	192K	288K
Space for CP/M	60K	60K	60K	60K	60K	60K
RAM Floppy	none	none	64K	192K	256K	448K
Operating s/ware for BASIC	cassette	ROM	ROM	ROM	ROM	ROM

All boards have a 32K print buffer (about 15 A4 pages).

Conclusion

I'm afraid that this product is bad news for my bank balance. It's the first memory enhancement system for Arnold that I would seriously consider buying and using on a regular basis. The RAMDISC alone is obviously attractive, but the opportunities for extended BASIC programming are unbeatable.

As the privileged owner of both a 464 and a 6128, I can't wait for a 6128 version to become available. The combination of built-in floppy and built-in RAMDISC would be of tremendous practical value.

We journalists tend to be a bit hesitant about actually paying for things – we prefer to try and wangle freebies from publicity-hungry manufacturers. In this case, however, I make an exception. If I can't wangle one, I'll be first in the queue to buy one.

DR Draw & DR Graph

Computer giants Digital Research – the people who brought you CP/M – have converted some of their programs for Arnold at a very competitive price. Steve Cooke goes drawing and graphing.

DR Draw and DR Graph
Digital Research, £49.95 each, disc only
CPC 6128, PCW 8256

Digital Research have been waxing lyrical about their 'Amstrad Professionals' range recently, and even went to the unusual length of taking a stand at the Amstrad Show in January to displayoff their wares. DR normally stick to servicing the business market, so their move into Amstrad-land could mean the arrival of some impressive up-market software at reasonable prices.

DR Draw and *DR Graph* both fall into the increasingly popular 49.95 price-bracket for Amstrad CP/M programs. Both packages are aimed squarely at the business user, but even if you're not the commercial type you may have been wondering what sort of drawing package you get for fifty smackers, so read on...

First the bad news. Since they require the GSX graphics extension to operate, you're won't get them up and running on anything other than a 6128 or PCW 8256. In practise, however, this is unlikely to limit their appeal, since most businessmen probably wouldn't have a 464 or 664 anyway.

Assuming, however, you've got the necessary hardware, what do you get? We'll poke our noses into *DR Draw* first, since this is the package that's most likely to have the broadest appeal.

Most home micros have by now acquired some pretty stunning graphics programs. Even the humble Spectrum has titles like *The Artist* which can give you everything from patterned fills to spray-paint options. Drawing programs, however, are a rather different breed – rather than treat the screen as a canvas on which you can splash colour and light, they treat it as a designer's layout sheet, divided into a grid on which various different drawing elements can be placed.

To make the difference clear, imagine you had to use a 'paint' program (like Kuma's *Artwork*, for example) to produce the illustration in Fig. 1. You would have no option but to use the CIRCLE, LINE, and PLOT functions to build up the entire image bit by bit. The final image is a single element, with each section individually drawn.

Using a draw-type program, however, you 'build up' your image using different elements. The bicycle, for example, has three identical elements consisting of segmented circles which form the two wheels and the chain sprocket. Draw programs enable you to create elements like these and then replicate them, using different horizontal and vertical scaling if desired, anywhere on the 'grid'. The final image is a collection of individual elements, each of which can be edited, saved to disc, shrunk, enlarged, and otherwise manipulated quite separately from the rest of the display.

This approach obviously has enormous benefits for certain types of illustration, but for it to be successful, the DRAW program has to offer not only a wide range of features but also a very friendly user-interface. As a general rule, the user of such a program is not so concerned with the creative aspect of screen design, but with saving time and at the same time maintaining a high-degree of technical accuracy with regard to scale, perspective, and image alignment.

Unfortunately, although *DR Draw* is very easy and quick to use, it has some annoying drawbacks. The first is in setting it all up. Installation involves copying about 20 files from the master disc onto two separate discs and is very poorly explained. CP/M aficionados will not experience any problems here, but for the naive user, such problems as the creation of an appropriate ASSIGN.SYS file will almost certainly invoke a lot of head-scratching.

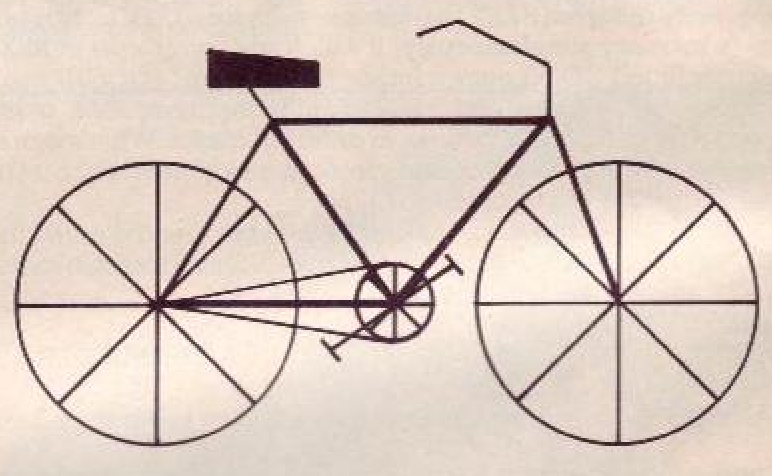
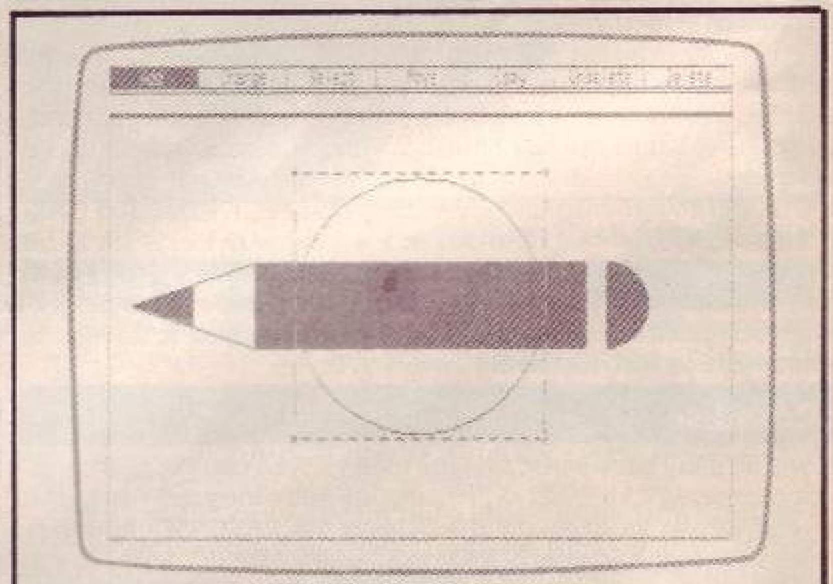


Figure 1



For example, *DR Draw* is set up so that it will edit in one screen mode and 'output' in another. You can therefore create your masterpiece using Mode 1 and then display it on a Mode 2 screen, but if you want (as I did) to develop images on the Mode 2 screen, you have to alter the ASSIGN file, and there is very little clear information in the documentation on how to do this.

The next drawback concerns printed output. The program uses the GSX graphics extension to drive the screen display, printer, and plotter (if you have one). However, you can only use GSX if a 'driver' is provided for your particular output device.

Drivers are provided for screen modes 0,1, and 2, but when it comes to printers you are limited to the Amstrad DMP1, Epson compatibles, Shinwa mechanisms, and Hewlett-Packard plotters. Although this does cover the most popular configurations, you may still find yourself with an incompatible printer if you're unlucky. Certainly my feeling is that for £49.95 there should be a wider selection.

Design elements in *DR Draw* fall into seven main categories: arcs, bars (rectangles), circles, lines, polygons, text, and markers. The last category simply provides a small selection of symbols that can be used for picking out or emphasising parts of a drawing. All the other categories can be drawn, scaled, moved, copied, deleted, and saved as desired during image composition. All operations are effected upon the current element, which is the last element created unless otherwise specified.

Unfortunately, although you can specify which element should be the current element, what you can't do is combine elements to form more complex ones. For example, it would be nice if you could, using the CIRCLE and LINE functions, create our bicycle wheel as in Fig 1 and then define the wheel as an element in its own right. This would save a lot of time but does not appear to be implemented in *DR Draw*.

There are seven different type-fonts available, though to be honest none of them is particularly attractive. There are a wide variety of fill patterns, and in Mode 1 there are also, of course, four colours to play around with, which can make a big difference in producing the final image - though you won't be able to reflect that difference on hard copy unless you've got a colour printer.

The program is, however, very easy to use once set up and despite a rather large number of sub-menus the user can create accurate displays quite quickly. Two different grid sizes are available in each mode, allowing you varying degrees of precision in placing your elements on-screen. The cross-hair cursor moves quickly and smoothly and is used to select menu-options as well as plot points. A 'SNAP' function will drag the cursor instantly to the nearest grid co-ordinate when plotting points if desired. Turning off 'SNAP' allows you to position points to pixel-accuracy either between or on the grid-points, but using the grid is a quick and easy way of aligning elements without having to laboriously calculate pixel positions.

Unfortunately a number of element manipulation functions tend to erase the grid markings which are not re-instated unless the 'REDRAW' option is selected. If you're using the more detailed grid then REDRAW takes an annoying amount of time to replot all the points before allowing you to continue.

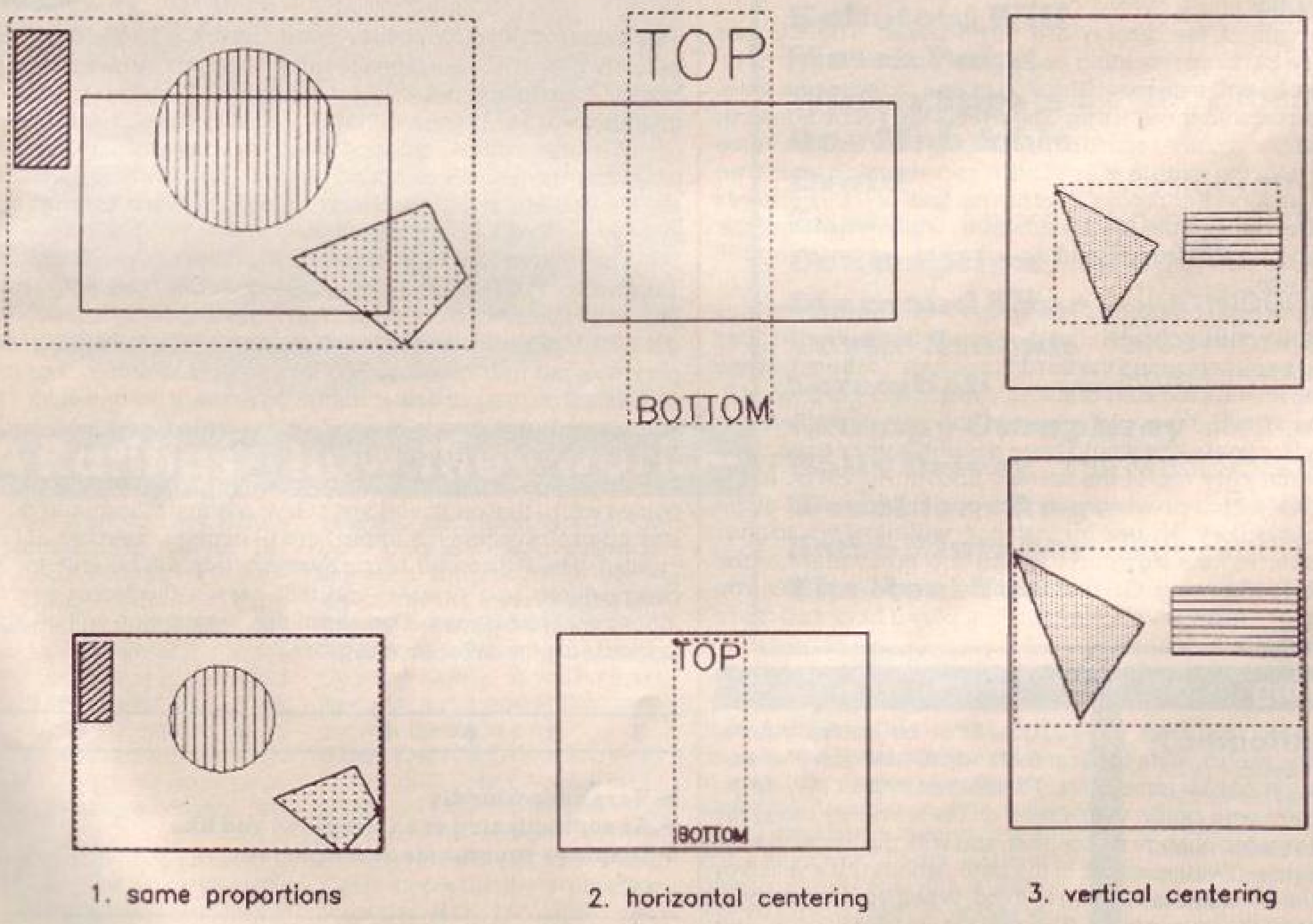
DR Draw is difficult to get up and running, but easy to use thereafter and is particularly well suited to the creation of flow-diagrams, certain types of technical drawings, and other illustrations that lend themselves to the 'bit-by-bit' approach. It's fun to use, but for most people a cheaper paint-type program may well be more attractive.

DR Graph

DR Graph, as its name suggests, is a utility program for transforming numeric data into diagrammatic information. Using the program, you can create line graphs, bar graphs, pie graphs, step graphs, and so on to display data entered either manually or imported from *Visicalc* or *Supercalc* data files.

Like *DR Draw*, this program requires the GSX graphics extension and so is not a candidate for 464 systems. Unlike *DR Draw*, however, its use is rather more specialised and at £49.95 is unlikely to have the general user rushing down to the shops with eager anticipation.

If, however, you have a copy of *Visicalc* or *Supercalc* that you are already using proficiently and you regularly need to create complex graphs then it may be worth a look. Bear in mind however that you will still have to ensure that your printer is compatible with the GSX drivers provided.



1. same proportions

2. horizontal centering

3. vertical centering

Let there be music

Pete Connor tinkers with *The Music System*. Does it have power to soothe savage beasts? Can it make every man his own Mozart?

THE MUSIC SYSTEM
Rainbird, £15.95 cass, £19.95 disc
CPC 464, 664, 6128

Anyone using this program for the first time should immediately hook the Amstrad up to the auxiliary plugs of a hi-fi system and load one of the tunes from the accompanying Sound and Song library. You'll get a blast of truly staggering music – a touch of Bach, a blast of Led Zep, a burst of the blues – which should instantly open your ears to the great potential of this excellent program.

The Music System is a superbly-executed package that allows you to compose music either by playing the keyboard or by entering notes directly on the stave. It really is very simple to get going, although making the most of it will require time and at least a little musical knowledge.

Simplicity of use is helped greatly by the use of those fashionable computer features – icons and pop-down menus. In *The Music System* they're more than just window dressing: they make the program not just pretty to look at (which it is) but clear to use.

Loading the program presents you with a screen divided into five distinct blocks. The largest area is taken up by the Voice Monitor Window., herinafter referred to as the VMW. This displays the staves on which your music is entered, and can be scrolled along as you enter more notes.

Below the VMW is the piano keyboard, corresponding to the top two rows of the computer's keyboard. Here you can doodle away at tunes, or compose – your notes can be entered on the VMW as you play.
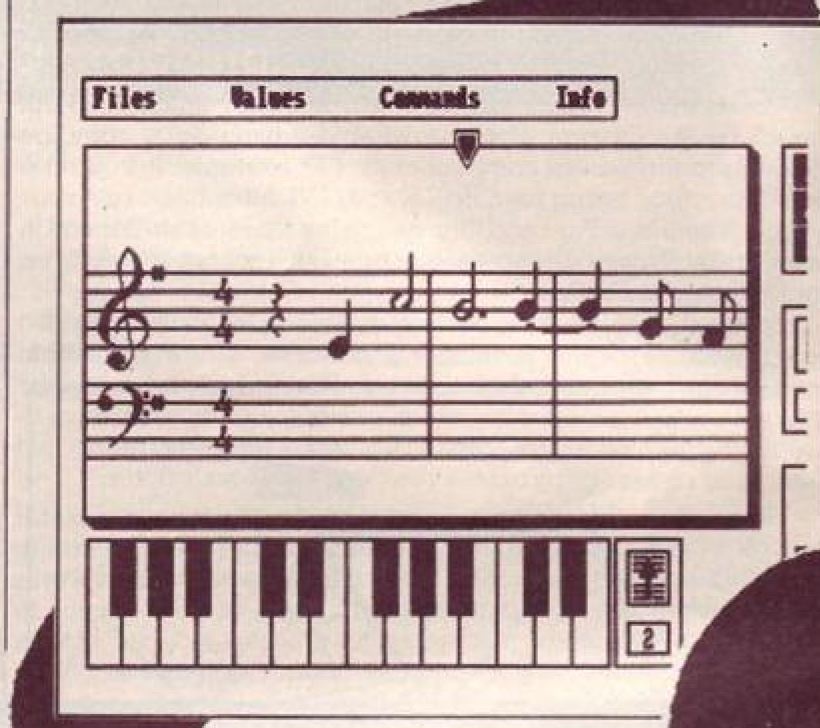
On the right of the display are three boxes. The top one contains three bars representing each of the Amstrad's voices or sound channels; you can only compose in one of these at a time. Below is an area with three icons. The first is the record device, showing whether you are recording or playing back and the voice you are using. In the middle is a cylinder representing your free space; it fills up as you compose. You have a limit of 1000 full notes per voice. On the right is the metronome, which regulates the tempo; you can set this from a snail's pace up to a *prestissimo* 188 beats per minute.

The bottom right box shows you three rows. The first enables you to alter the volume of each sound channel, the second to alter the envelope parameters and the third the octave. So these last two mean you can change the kind of sound you get and the pitch of it; fiddling around with them can give you the sort of synthesiser effects that a few years ago would have needed a very expensive machine. At the very top of the screen, above the VMW, is the Command line, which presents you with pop-down menus at the touch of a function key. *Values*, for instance, will allow you to alter the key signature, time signature, tempo and much more of the music you are composing. Or, indeed, *have* composed. Thus you can write a piece in a very slow tempo, but play it back as if there were no tomorrow.

Composing

Two ways to do this: from the keyboard, or by entering notes directly on the staves. With the first method the note you play and hear on the keyboard is immediately displayed in the VMW. In the second method, you begin with a note on the stave. By using the cursor keys you can change its position, and with the function keys change its value – i.e. the length of the note, whether it's sharp or flat, where the beat falls in relation to it etc. When you're satisfied, press Enter and the note is fixed. The same method is used to alter tunes you've already composed and stored.

When you've composed and recorded as much music as you want, you return to the beginning, press f0 and the music will play.



This alone is pretty impressive, but if you press Shift + f0 the music not only plays, but the notes scroll through the VMW as they are heard. This function alone should make *The Music System* an invaluable aid to anyone studying, or just making, music.

With three different sound channels and the ability to synthesise sound, the limitations of a home computer don't seem too bad at all. But you are recommended to feed the sound through a hi-fi system – it makes a big difference.

The system can be as complex or as basic as you want it to be. Those who don't know a quaver from a wobble could find it just a little sophisticated, but it doesn't take much musical knowledge to get a lot of pleasure and instruction from it. The only thing I could play was the first two bars of *Merrily we roll along*, but my *32 Variations* on that particular theme gave me, if no-one else, a lot of pleasure. And if you're in need of inspiration, just load a sonata from the library and see what is possible.

It will take a while to become familiar with the system, but it comes with a thorough and very clear manual that should get you started pretty quickly. Rainbird are planning to release, at £29.95 on disc, *The Advanced Music System* – this will be able to dump compositions to a printer, and will have a file linker to create longer pieces of music. Owners of the first version will be able to upgrade for the difference in price.

G O O D N E W S

- ► **Very user-friendly**
- ► **As sophisticated or as simple as you like**
- ► **Displays your music as it's played**

B A D N E W S

- ► **Needs hi-fi output to really show its paces**

THE ALL-ACTION REVIEWING SYSTEM

ACTION TEST

There's an outstanding Mastergame this month. *Spindizzy* is stupendous, not just because of its size, but because of the quality and slickness of its graphics and gameplay.

There are some top notch raves as well, covering every taste from desperate combat – ground *and* air – to mental puzzling. If you don't see something here that takes your fancy, it's unlikely you'll ever find a game to suit you.

But there's also quite a bit of rough stuff around. We haven't spared anyone's feelings – if a game stinks, we say so. We don't *like* to do it, but it's our duty. Because Action Test is all about letting you know what's worth your hard-earned cash.

1. EXPERT GAMEPLAY. No game gets written up until it's had a long and thorough test. Take software editor Bob Wade. Despite his tender years (not to mention sore trigger finger), he's pretty deadly with a joystick and happens to have played virtually every Amstrad game ever released. As they say down these parts, BW reaches the parts other reviewers can't touch.

2. EXTRA OPINIONS. It's always dangerous to rely on just one reviewer – tastes vary enormously. So all the games we review get looked at by at least two people, many of them by three. Not only does this mean you can read an additional view under the 'Second opinion' heading, it also means that our ratings are more reliable, because they're arrived at by a process of debate among those concerned.

3. LABELLED SCREEN SHOTS. It's obviously important to print screen-shots, but often they can be hard to make sense of. Labelling the different elements can make all the difference (even though the art department kick up an incredible fuss about the extra work – oh, they do.)

4. CLEAR SUMMARIES. Ever read a review where you ended up pretty unsure of the reviewer's overall opinion? To make our own views absolutely clear we include a concise summary of them under the Good news/Bad news headings.

5. RATINGS BOXES. We rate our games using percentages for extra flexibility and precision. And with so many games to work through, it's a help to be able to see at a glance which are good and which aren't. Our ratings boxes do this – just look out for those featuring long bars with dark tips!

AA Ratings – how they work –

We've come up with five different headings which, we reckon, cover all that's important about a game. The most important is the final one which represents our overall assessment of it. Games which score 80% or higher earn the much sought after label of AA RAVE, while the highest rated game in any month becomes our MASTERGAME – we go through agonies before selecting that one.

The ratings categories are meant to be fairly self-explanatory, but that wasn't why we didn't print anything about them last issue – we just ran out of space! So here are the missing explanations. Hopefully you'll agree our categories make a refreshing change from the usual.

GRAPHICS is the first category. Basically, this means..er what the game looks like; colour, definition, animation, imagination. It's safe to say that monochrome Noughts and Crosses will score fairly low.

SONICS next. Sweet music, horrible noise, silence, all will be rated on quality and quantity. This rating involves the use of ears.

GRAB FACTOR We think you'll like this one. Does the game really GRAB you? Are you hooked? Will you miss an episode of The Archers to play it? High Grab Factor means that the whole office abandons work, Bob Wade whoops with delight and even the publisher looks mildly pleased. 100% means the game is more addictive than cider.

STAYING POWER You may have got the habit, but how long are you going to keep it? Staying Power tells you how often you're likely to return to a game. That depends on such matters as the number of screens and levels, the variety of the task, the degree of long-term challenge. An addictive game with only a couple of screens to it will get a high Grab Factor and low Staying Power, one with a 1000-screen playing area but lacking in playability would be the other way round.

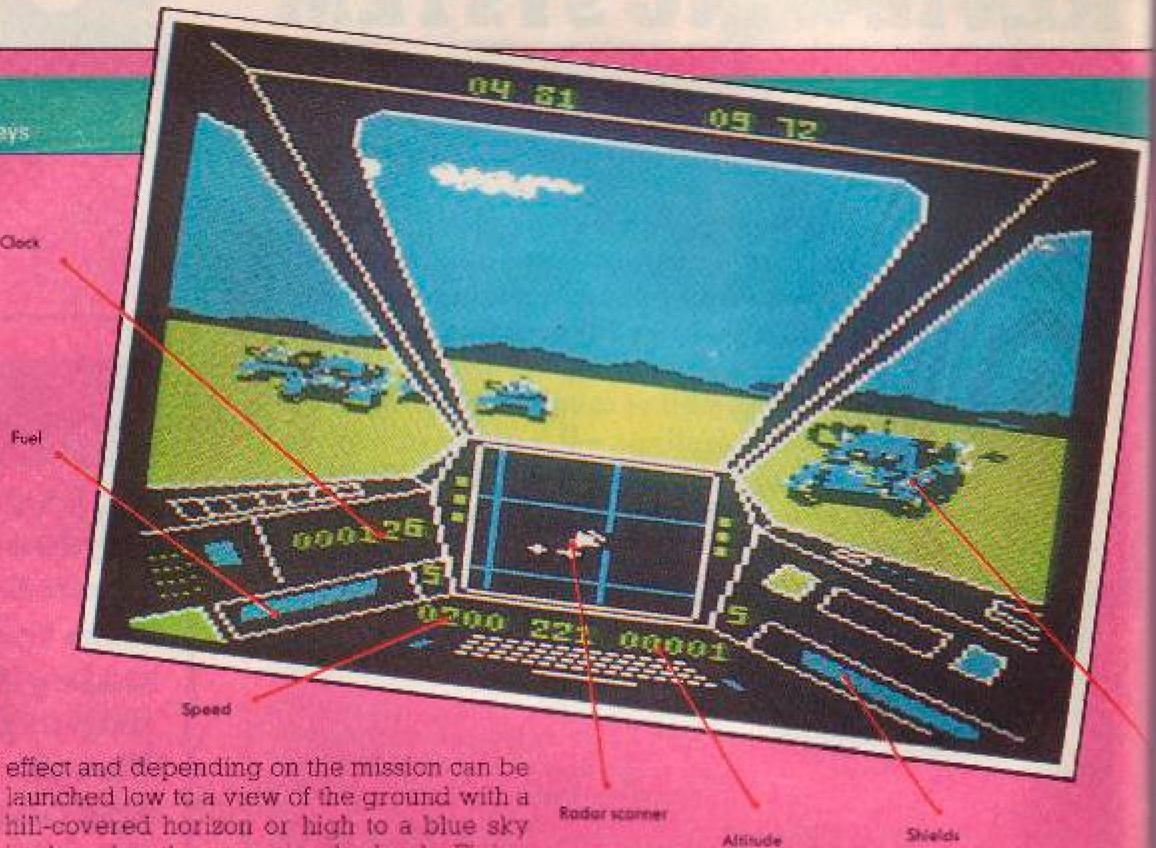
AA RATING Nothing to do with cars. This is the result of a very hard sum involving all the other ratings, plus factors like price, quality of packaging and instructions, reliability and any other relevant factors we can think of. You won't go far wrong with any game over 80%.

Compatibility

All programs this month are compatible across the range of 464, 664, 6128. In each case we've either tested them ourselves or confirmed it with the software houses.

SKYFOX

Ariolasoft/Electronic Arts, £9.95 cass, joystick with keys



Flight simulators and arcade games continue to get closer in nature. Although this one fails on the side of the shoot-em-up it contains many elements of flying skill and strategy. The other intriguing factor is the mixture of ground and air action against both tanks and planes instead of just the usual aerial battles.

The first task that awaits you is to choose from the five ranks (skill levels) and 15 battle scenarios that will determine what sort of a mission the Skyfox fighter is sent on. There are seven training missions where the skills needed to deal with both air and ground targets can be learnt before taking on one of the eight invasions where the enemy will throw all his forces at you at once.

> **SECOND OPINION**
>
> *I found this one of the more engrossing flight simulator/combat games available for the Arnold – particularly because you can get into it immediately, but still have a long way to go to achieve the higher rankings. Despite the slightly unsatisfactory graphics, there's still a lot of satisfaction to be had in zapping the enemy.*
>
> PC

The fighter starts at a home base to which it can return at any time as long as it hasn't been overrun or bombed by the enemy. It's launched through an unconvincing tunnel effect and depending on the mission can be launched low to a view of the ground with a hill-covered horizon or high to a blue sky broken by the occasional cloud. Flying around this display is easy enough with left and right turning and diving and climbing. You'll also notice the nose of the plane oscillating of its own accord making tanks below you particularly difficult to hit.

You're equipped with three types of weapon, all of which are forward launched. Twin laser cannons have an unlimited supply of ammo but there are also limited stocks of guided and heat-seeking missiles for the more persistent target. These are all easily used with the target merely having to be centred on the screen, although they'll do their best not to be.

In invasion missions the tanks and planes can be dropped by low-flying motherships which have to be dealt with quickly before the odds against Skyfox become too overwhelming. That's the bones of the game – flying around zapping up waves of tanks, who usually come in groups of more than five, and planes that operate in fewer numbers. The game gets more complicated when it comes to the cockpit display and base computer controls.

The display is packed with information

TANK COMMAND

Amsoft/Magic Logic, £13.95 disk only, joystick or keys

For a disk-only game a 4x4 screen playing area may not sound like much – but within those screens *Tank Command* has a wealth of detail and action. This isn't immediately apparent from the starting screen but as soon as you get into tank battles and explore the landscape the depth of the game becomes apparent.

Your task is to find soldiers dotted around the playing area who have to report to you. They appear one at a time and in a set order of positions on the map which have to be reached in your tank and cleared of enemy vehicles before the man can report. This is the main attraction and challenge of the game as you try to get to the next soldier without having your turret splattered across the picturesque landscape.

There are two main phases and views of the game – one a movement phase with an overhead view and the other the fighting phase with a panoramic view from the turret. The overhead view is of a single game screen showing the landscape features and tanks. The landscape consists of open country, rivers, woods, beaches, a lake and other minor features. The tank can drive on any of these at varying speeds – including the lake!

When the tank crosses between screens the disk drive whirrs and the new screen flicks up. A map of all 16 screens can be viewed and this shows the position of all the revealed enemy are and the next soldier to get to. The enemy will reveal themselves when the tank appears on their screen or when it gets near to them. Running into a tank or pressing the fire button will change the display to the view from the tank turret.

> **SECOND OPINION**
>
> *Very nice game this, with lovely graphics and some good blasting action. The enemy put up a brave fight, often managing to weaken your armour enough to give you the Game Over business. It is by no means easy to slip in and blast them without being blasted in return. When there are two or more tanks on screen the action can get pretty frenetic – time to go off and scour the landscape for another route to your goal.*
>
> PC

This is more attractive than the map screens with some detailed scenery against which the fighting takes place. The turret can be swivelled 360 degrees with the background scrolling reasonably well as you move. The enemy can be anywhere around you so first they have to be got into view and then their range found. They can be very close to you if you collide with them, filling the view, or anywhere between there and the far distance where they are very small.

Each target is equipped with different thicknesses of armour which have to be hammered through with successive hits from your shells. The target has to be pinpointed by changing the elevation on the gun and rotating to keep the moving vehicles in your sights. Not only will they try to avoid you but the enemy will shoot back and wear down

The enemy hardware

There are five types of enemy weapon tha[t] have different thicknesses of armour and speed.

LIGHT TANKS: can move around at speed but only have two units of armour. Don't pack much punch.

MEDIUM TANKS: have six units of armour and can still move quite fast. Much more formidable.

HEAVY TANKS: eight units of armour but ca[n] be caught while they're not moving much. Beware getting close to them or they'll rea[lly] let you have it.

MOBILE ARTILLERY: only three units of armour but plenty of manoeuvrability and firepower.

STATIC GUN EMPLACEMENTS: four units o[f] armour and don't move. Can cause much damage since they usually come in pairs o[r] threes and fire fast.

AA RAVE

including a radar scanner that operates overhead or forward and gives update messages on your situation, a clock of elapsed game time, fuel indicator, speed indicator, shield indicator, altitude indicator, guided and heat seeking missile counts, map coordinates and compass heading. There's also an auto pilot that flies you to the next target while you take a rest or check up on the base computer.

The computer is the source of lots of interesting information not least of which is a map of the whole playing area showing the enemy concentrations and your own installations. You can examine the battlefield in detail by zooming in on sections or set the auto pilot for a particular square. This tactical map is invaluable for reference between battles so that you know just where to take Skyfox to be most effective. The computer also allows you to check on the score summary of damage received and inflicted and to get reports on the status of installations and the base.

The installations and base contain personnel and are protected by shields that gradually get worn down by the enemy attacks until they are finally destroyed. Skyfox can be landed at the home base but not installations to refuel and recharge shields.

All of this action will keep you fully occupied but not so that you won't notice some rather odd graphics. The tanks and planes look all right when you get close to them but in the distance or when they explode they appear as a messy jumble of characters that look like they're in severe need of a sprite designer. The sound isn't overwhelming either with engine noise, explosions and warning noises.

These slight grumbles apart the game still has lots of depth and with all the different scenarios and ranks will keep you busy for many long hours of combat.

BW

GOOD NEWS

- **15 different missions.**
- **Different difficulties and missions mean any skill of player can enjoy it.**
- **Excellent range of controls and features.**
- **Interesting graphics on the ground when close to target.**
- **Plenty of depth and lasting challenge.**

BAD NEWS

- **Some graphics are indistinct and blocky.**
- **Will take time to familiarise yourself with key controls.**

GRAPHICS	67%
SONICS	41%
GRAB FACTOR	85%
STAYING POWER	87%
A A RATING	81%

Mass of missions

The 15 missions in the game should give any player the chance to get into the game and gradually improve their performance.

TANK TRAINING and 2: waves of tanks head towards the base from where you are launched. In the first they come straight at you; in the second they are dotted around the base.

PLANE TRAINING 1,2 and 3: Skyfox will be launched either behind an enemy plane, nose to nose with one or against several dotted around the map.

HIGH/LOW TRAINING: alternate waves of tanks and planes to be dealt with.

COMBO TRAINING: tanks and planes will arrive together in the same wave.

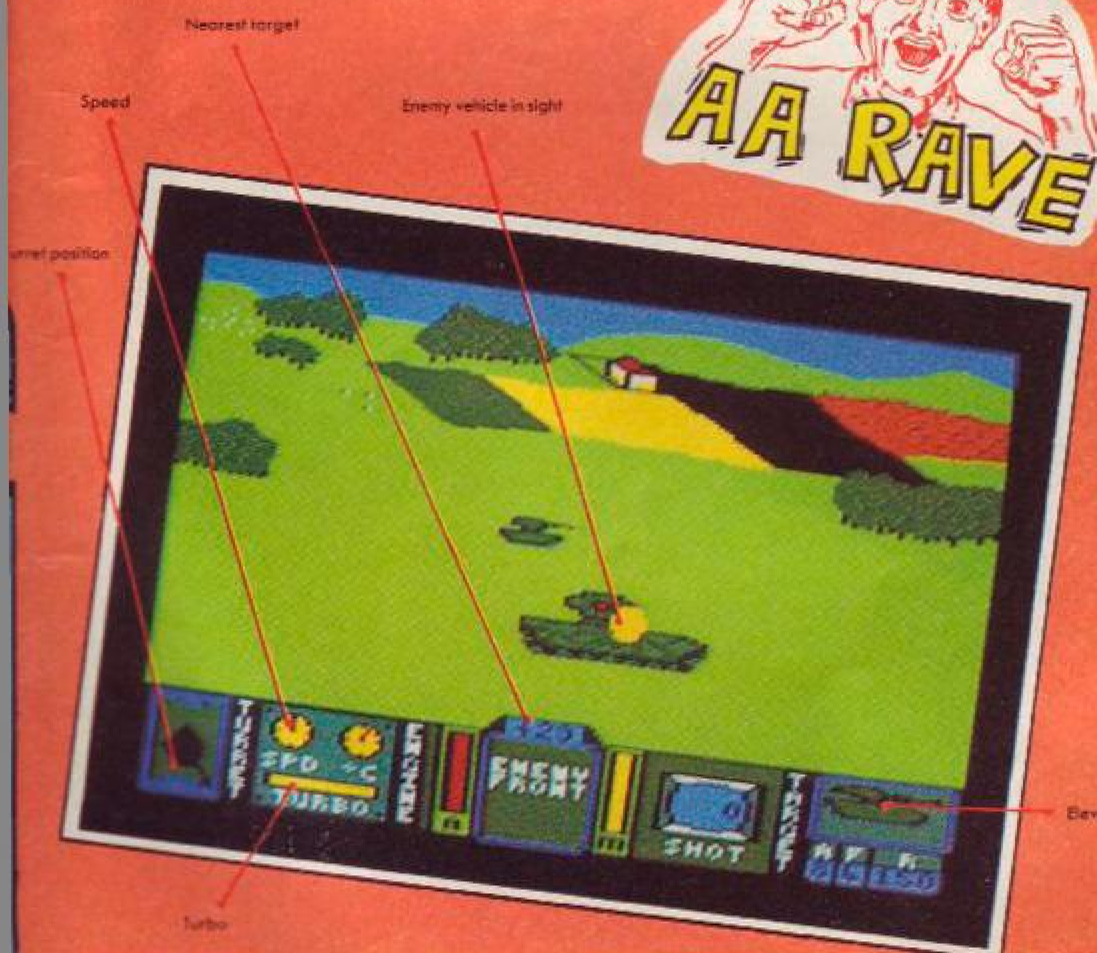
SMALL INVASION: one mothership will launch planes and tanks against you.

FULL INVASION: three motherships to deal with.

MASSIVE ONSLAUGHT: six motherships! Say your prayers.

HALO, ALAMO, ADVANCING WALL, CHESS and CORNERED: multiple mothership invasions with different shapes requiring different strategies – all of them tough.

AA RAVE



your own armour or disappear off the screen. Prior to explosion the tanks flash brightly but may still loose off a last shot before going to the scrapyard.

After clearing a sector containing a soldier he will drive up to the screen in a jeep, leap out and salute you before you return to the overview of the sector. Another nice feature is the turbo on the tank which will automatically race the tank to full speed for a time. Use of the turbo will heat up the engine dramatically and if the temperature gets too high movement may be severely restricted until it cools down.

While whizzing around you need to become familiar with certain types of location where the enemy will always appear in the same place. On roads with barriers across gun emplacements and tanks may appear by them and present a dangerous threat. Or an enemy may pop up in the middle of a road you're busy steaming along.

At the end of a game there's a readout of how many of the enemy were destroyed, men reported and a ranking. If all the men are successfully rescued the armour is partially restrengthened and then the tank is thrown back into the fray with even more of the enemy in greater concentrations.

At first sight the graphics, sound and gameplay are pretty ordinary but what makes the game a winner is the absorbing nature of the task of battling through to the next soldier and the increasing difficulty of an

already tough computer opponent. The panoramic views are detailed and the fighting that takes place on them requires skill to minimise damage to the tank. A worthy addition to the Gold range that will please most disk owners.

BW

GOOD NEWS

- **Well designed map and features.**
- **Good panoramic views.**
- **Tough tank opponents that get tougher in numbers.**
- **Absorbing task as you fight from soldier to soldier.**

BAD NEWS

- **Tape owners will have to wait for a version of the game for once.**
- **A larger playing area would have been nice.**

GRAPHICS	76%
SONICS	40%
GRAB FACTOR	83%
STAYING POWER	81%
A A RATING	81%

STOCK MARKET SPECULATOR

Brain Power/Collins Soft, £17.95 cass, keys only

This isn't one of those simple games where you deal casually in oil, gold, gems and missiles and make a few billion pounds overnight. It's a full blown simulation of dealing in the stock market. I can see the pound signs glinting in your eyes already, you greedy bunch of capitalists. Just remember its a game and the real thing is always more unpredictable than a simulation – otherwise you could seriously damage your wealth.

One to three players can take part on one of four different levelsfrom an idle dabbler with an inheritance of £10,000 to play with to a pension fund manager who has to manage a portfolio of £5 million. On each level you begin with a different amount of cash and shares to handle and a frequency of dealing with them from twice a day to once a month. The game always begins on 13th January 1986 and could go on for months and years, particularly since you can save the game.

The players deal in the shares of 48 companies, all of them real and each with a write-up on their background at the back of the instruction booklet. Initially the list of options is horribly daunting but with a little patience they can be worked through, particularly if you go through the main menu step by step.

This has six choices on it: examine portfolio, company list, stockbroker, details, get news and done, the last of these ending the current game turn.

The portfolio is your collection of shares and when examined it will reveal how your shares have changed after the last turn. The company list will show the fortunes of all the other companies as well so that the fast movers and big losers can be identified. The next option is your stockbroker and he can provide lots more interesting information.

SECOND OPINION

It's hard to comment on a game like this without playing it for days on end. But here goes, anyway. It's certainly very cleverly designed, and can become engrossing if you stick at it. It's nice to see that the companies are real ones, instead of a load of fictitious nonsense. Playing the game could be good training for the real thing.

PC

The broker will give details on orders you have placed for shares in the current turn and past ones, advice on what company results are expected and how they will affect the share price, a portfolio summary to show your overall position, a performance rating

PINGPONG

Imagine/Konami, £8.95 cass, joystick only

Computer games have come a long way in the last few years and there's no better highlight than the comparison between those old games where you had two white lines for bats and a white dot for a ball, and this all-action table tennis simulation in 3D. This game of skill and quick reactions may not have much complexity or depth but it's fast, furious and fun.

SECOND OPINION

Very good fun – certainly more ping than pong. The graphics resemble very closely the arcade version, which means they're very sharp and clear. The floating, severed hands are an amusing touch and it's a relief not to have to chase the ball as well as decide on your shot. Despite all this user-friendliness, I still found it pretty challenging and just about the best thing of its kind on the Amstrad.

PC

The display shows the view from above one end of the table, much as a camera would on TV. The perspective tapers the table and at each end there is a ghostly floating hand holding a bat. This may strike you as a little odd at first but it soon becomes clear that it's essential to allow you to see the ball and table all the time. And it actually looks good as the hands zip around the play area.

There are one or two player games and



Another spin se... prepares to ro... over the net





How to win and lose a fortune without moving from the keyboard

on a graph against the FT index and percentage performnace against the building societies and finally an analysis of the performance of particular groups of companies. The most valuable of these each time is the advice, most of the others only being referred to occasionally.

The 'get news' option gives you the latest news from the Financial Crimes paper but this isn't usually as up to date as the broker's advice. At nearly any stage in these menus you can access the details section where an individual company information screen can be brought on screen and shares bought and sold.

The menus and text are presented in a business-like way but this was never meant to appeal on its looks or sound. The game is very involved and takes some while to get into and play but provides a good simulation. The main problem is of course that there's no risk, which has always been the fascination of gambling, and like all computer games can be very predictable once you're familiar with it. Budding capitalists and money hoarders should give it a look.

BW

G O O D N E W S

► **A realistic and involved simulation.**
► **Plenty to occupy your mind with lots of options and figures to handle.**
► **Well packaged and good instructions to guide through the jargon.**

B A D N E W S

► **The real thing isn't as predictable as the game.**
► **May be too heavy and complicated for many.**

GRAPHICS	17%
SONICS	0%
GRAB FACTOR	60%
STAYING POWER	69%
A A RATING	59%

five levels of skill in each. The skill level affects the speed of the game and on the toughest two the computer really gets very difficult to beat or even score against. The winner of each game is the first player to reach 11 points or to establish a two point lead if they get to 10 all. Each player has five services in a row before handing over for the other player's five.

In the two player game the contest is the best of three games with one player being able to play on the keyboard if desired. In one player games you are always at the near end of the court but with two players being at the far end is a distinct disadvantage and so they alternate ends between games.

When in play the bat will automatically track the ball leaving the player to decide on his stroke. This can be played either forehand or backhand (aimed right or left) and with top or back spin. A smash can also be used against your opponent's lobs with your own lobs being produced by good/bad timing of your ordinary strokes. Shots can hit the net, land out of court, be completely missed, returned by your opponent. Or you can do the same to him.

There is an additional scoring system to the game points - every time you hit the ball the score goes up by ten. This leads to a rather odd situation where the longer you can keep rallies and games going the higher the score, whereas quick efficient games on your part will be low scoring. However, winning is the main thing and success at one level will take you onto the next to continue the battle against a faster and better opponent.

The graphics and sound are very arcade-like and make this a very good conversion. The gameplay itself is also exciting and despite the limited number of strokes games can develop into very absorbing contests against a wily computer player. The last level in particular plays at a similar pace to proper table tennis and takes some adjusting to after the early slower levels. An appealing game that just lacks a little in variety after a while.

BW

G O O D N E W S

► **Good display and great disembodied hands.**
► **Easy to learn but with very tough later levels.**
► **Two player option for added spice.**
► **Fast, exciting, quick reaction action.**

B A D N E W S

► **Not much variety.**
► **Playing at the far end is difficult.**

GRAPHICS	70%
SONICS	57%
GRAB FACTOR	77%
STAYING POWER	68%
A A RATING	74%

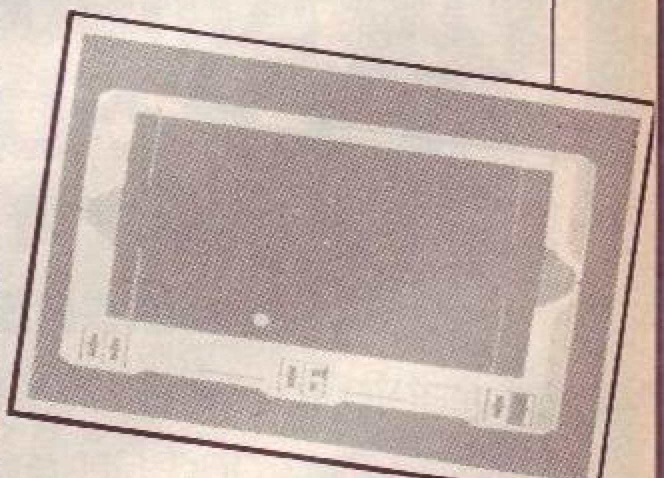
RICOCHET

Blaby, £2.99 cass, joystick or keys

Somebody else obviously played the same games as me as a kid because this is a version of one of my old favourites, *Crossfire* where ball-bearings were fired at a puck on a curving playing area to force it towards the opponent's goal. I thought I'd seen the last of the game years ago but unfortunately I hadn't - even though the ball bearings have been replaced by laser fire.

The playing area is rectangular in shape with a laser gun at either end behind a goalmouth. Two lines angle in from the sides to form a wide funnel towards the goal with the puckstar starting in the middle of the board. By shooting the puckstar with the limited supply of laser bullets it can be forced in a particular direction. However the opponent, computer or player, will be trying to move it the other way.

The winner is the first to reach a set target of goals but a time limit is set on each goal and if this runs out before one is scored the puckstar is replaced in the centre of the board for the combatants to have another try. That is the bones of the game but the author has tried to embellish it, unsuccessfully, by introducing all manner of weird options and parameters.

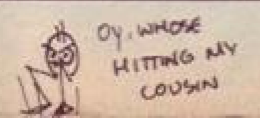


The puckstar homes in on one of its favourite corners

The simplest is the size of the goal but this soon gives way to settings of gravity, collision mode, energy bounce, initial energy and inertia. The exact efect of each of these has to be experimented with to discover but it can do some pretty weird things to the puckstar and the bullets.

You may find the puck becomes immovable and sits in one corner of the table or that it fails to obey most of the laws of science. The bullets can do the strangest things curving around in U-turns, stopping dead and rolling backwards, swerving like a baseball pitch in a hurricane or zapping across the board like Concorde with a tail wind.

39 ►



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All this playing around can be interesting for a while but the shallowness of the game and simple display make this a definite non-starter. The best bits of the program are the title music and screens. They flatter to deceive – if the same amount of work had gone into the game things would have been a lot better.

BW

SECOND OPINION

Unlike BW I have no happy childhood memories of such games. This version isn't going to give me any to cherish in my senior citizenship.

PC

GOOD NEWS

- **Lots of silly parameters to play about with.**
- **Nice title music.**

BAD NEWS

- **Rotten gameplay even on the preset parameters.**
- **Far too simple and dated game idea.**
- **Parameters are too complicated and involved.**
- **Title screens and music flatter to deceive.**

GRAPHICS	23%
SONICS	71%
GRAB FACTOR	20%
STAYING POWER	14%
A A RATING	18%



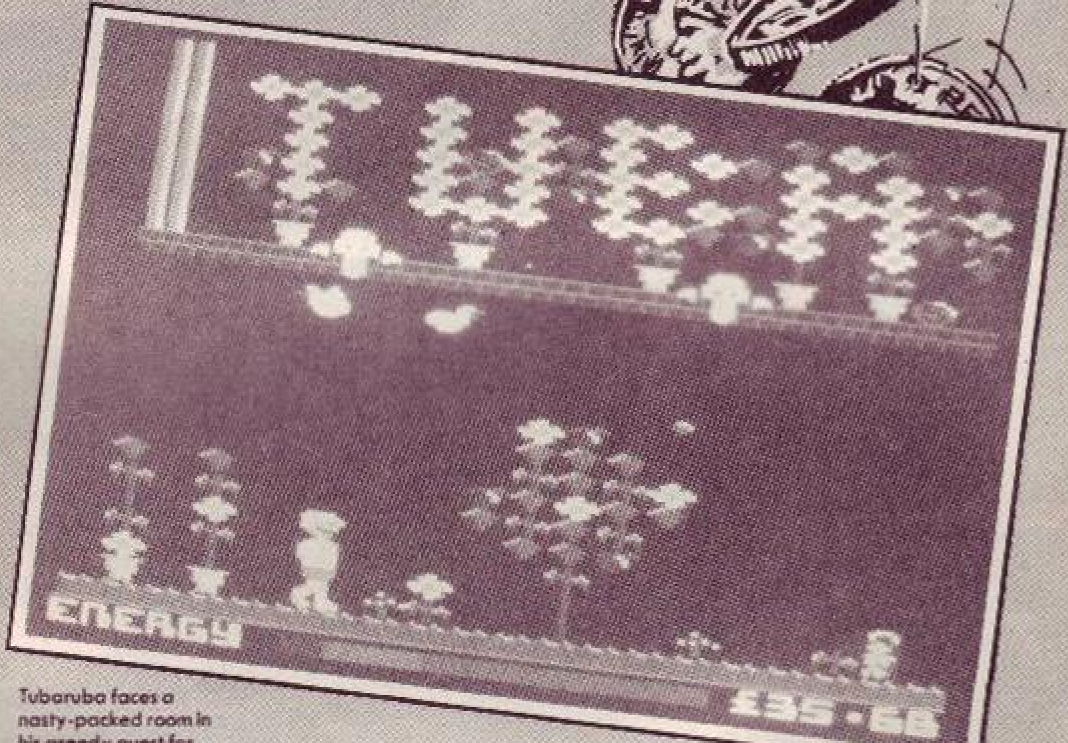
TUBARUBA

Advance Software Promotions, £7.95 cass, £12.95 disk, joystick or keys

The curious name of the game is derived from its star, a schoolboy nicknamed the same, and one suspects that it's a reference to the programmer Tooba Zaidi – perhaps it's what all his friends call him. The game in which our rhyming hero appears is a multi-screen one where he walks and flies around collecting money and blasting merry hell out of lots of aliens.

The money is to replace a school window he broke. This will cost him £50 as well as determine his end of term grade at school. With stakes like that and the headmaster betting you his Ferrari you can't do it, you can hardly resist the challenge. The gameplay itself is quite simple: Tubaruba just has to find the money strewn around the 20-odd screens in £1 and 5p coins. He can also make money, a penny a time, by shooting the aliens that attack him.

The task is made difficult by the limited energy that TR has and the fact that many things can drain it. Shooting steadily uses up his supply, as does touching the nasties. Some of these make him explode in a spectacular shower of dots and drain a chunk of energy. He has infinite lives with the game only ending when the energy runs out, but with every screen packed with danger this happens all too fast.



Tubaruba faces a nasty-packed room in his greedy quest for cash

SECOND OPINION

My first impressions of this game were of almost unplayable speed. After dozens of lives I at last got the hang of it – at which point it became a very playable game. Graphics and sound are both pretty good and while it won't worry your grey matter, the brain cells do need a rest now and again. Don't they?

PC

The way to replenish energy is by picking up the money and more importantly the food that is lying about all over the place. Most things only increase the supply by a small amount but some objects will replenish it entirely and are immensely valuable. When TR finally runs out of energy and gets expelled he automatically walks to the middle of the screen, lies down and explodes like a firework display – nasty way to go.

The rooms are all nicely designed with a wide variety of features and dangers within. Some follow movement patterns, others home in, some zip about at high speed and really sneaky dangers just don't move and wait to sap your strength as you pass over them. If you can't shoot them you'll have to avoid them and this is where the jet pack comes in handy. It allows TR to fly about quickly and considerably enhances his chances of survival.

Many of the nasties shoot golden ball missiles which follow long curving trajectories and explode TR if contacted. TR's own bullets (bubble gum) are also affected by gravity and start to dip after a few centimetres flight on screen.

There are two basic ways of getting between screens, all of which are flick screens. The easiest is just by flying off the edge of one and into another, although sometimes these exits may not be immediately obvious and you'll have to search them. There are also windows which when flown into transport TR to another location. But this costs him energy and should be used sparingly.

The looks and sounds of the game are good with lots of varied nasties, all fast moving, and attractive screen designs accompanied by some catchy music and appropriate sound effects. It isn't very demanding mentally but as pure arcade action it's pretty tough and entertaining.

BW

GOOD NEWS

- **Attractive screens and moving graphics.**
- **Extremely tough task to complete.**
- **Nice backing music.**
- **Good touches like teleport windows, bullet trajectories and explosions.**

BAD NEWS

- **Not a lot to think about.**
- **In some situations energy can disappear horribly fast.**

GRAPHICS	77%
SONICS	75%
GRAB FACTOR	76%
STAYING POWER	69%
A A RATING	74%

I HAD A FRIEND WHO PLAYED THAT – OR WAS IT THE TRUMPET?



RUN FOR GOLD

Hill MacGibbon, £7.95 cass, joystick or keys

If you've had enough of wrist-wrecking sport games that d mand more of your arm than your mind then sit back and relax, because here we have one that won't break your joystick – and the only time it will make you sweat is with the tension of a close race finish. It challenges you to race over three different distances and to reach the Olympics in each one.

The three events are the 400m, 800m and 1500m. Each one demands its own tactics and a long battle through three other major championships before you can get to the Olympics. Two runners are chosen, one for the 400 and one for the 800/1500 and they will have to race against 40 other individual competitors. These all have weird names many of which you might recognise as being jumbled up versions of real runners – S Ebesco and S Marc.

SECOND OPINION

This is a very exciting game to compete in. You're up against some really top-class athletes in Triszt, Cheddar and the rest but you always feel tht if you train hard enough and use the right tactics you're in with a chance of a medal, if not a world record. The display is excellent and the animation realistic. Beats waggling any day.

PC

Each race will have eight runners in it including your man and once you've discovered what lane he's in the race can begin. The display shows a picture about three lanes wide with the runner in the centre and the track stretching away in front of him, or a bend curving out of view. By his side (800 and 1500) or ahead and behind him on their blocks (400) are other runners. The starter will give the 'on your marks...get set...go' signals with a random interval between each to stop you being able to predict the start and get a flyer.

If the runner does false start he can't afford to do it again or he'll be disqualified. He can also be disqualified for running off the edges of the track or for going out of his lane in the 400m and before the break in the 800m. However it is often worth trying to anticipate the start in the smaller meetings when trying for a good time as you get another chance. In the championships you don't.

There aren't too many things to control while running but there are two levels of play, one of which is very tough. On level one the runner will keep in lane even around the bends and you control his position in the lane and his effort. This is determined by two gauges on the screen, energy and speed – the faster he goes the more energy he uses. Careful use of energy is needed so that you will last the race but still be able to finish strongly and beat the fast-finishing competition.

On level two the left/right movement of the runner has to be continually controlled by the player and this makes cornering much tougher indeed. On both levels the other runners can get in your way though and the runner may even stumble and fall, losing valuable time. You can check on where the opposition are in relation to you with a side view which also pauses the game.

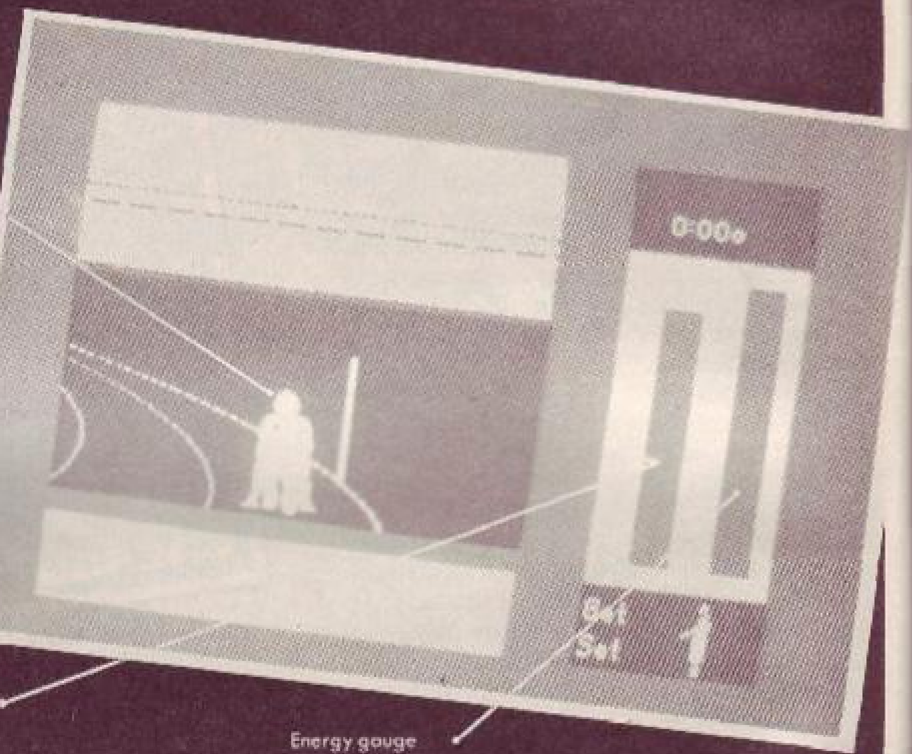
Each race is run in real time so reaching the Olympics in all three events may take some while. Trying to break world records may take even longer. The runners can be saved and the more races they have under their belts before a championship, the faster they will be. Unfortunately the same is also true of the other competitors.

The animation of the runners is excellent although when there are several on screen the action may noticeably slow down and when runners overlap some nasty white blobs can be created. There are one or two musical ditties within the game and a lot of footsteps as you pound the track. The races demand plenty of practice and concentration but your reward could be a gold medal at the Olympics.

BW



Great animation as your whiter than white runner heads for the finishing line.



The runner on his blocks

Speed gauge

Energy gauge

GOOD NEWS

- **Excellent animation on runners.**
- **Three different events requiring different tactics.**
- **Tough to win and even tougher to break records.**
- **Good opponents make for exciting races and close finishes.**
- **Nice touch when the runner falls over.**

BAD NEWS

- **Screen slows down with several runners in view.**
- **One mistake can ruin a whole race (like the real thing?)**

GRAPHICS	78%
SONICS	56%
GRAB FACTOR	84%
STAYING POWER	80%
A A RATING	80%

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KOKOTONI WILF

Elite, £8.95 cass, £13.95 disk, joystick only

This is the first release from Elite since *FB's Boxing* over six months ago but that lean spell looks set to come to an end with *Commando* and *Roller Coaster* following hot on its heels. Those games are likely to make more of an impact, but this exploration game will still find plenty of takers for its pleasant graphics and difficult action.

The Wilf of the title is an ancient hero bearing a pair of wings on his back. He's in search of the pieces of the Dragon Amulet that have been scattered through six time zones. He begins in the year one million BC and has to flap his way through to 2001 collecting bits of amulet on the way and avoiding the many dangers set against him.

About 60 screens make up the six time zones with each zone having characteristic scenery and inhabitants of the era in which it is set. One thing that appears in every zone is seagulls – obviously a very resilient bird that refused to evolve in one million years into anything but two flapping white lines.



Wilf has time on his hands as he flaps through history

There are plenty of other hazards apart from the gulls with pterodactyls and dinosaurs, soldiers, monks, spaceships, killer plants, helicopters, missile launchers and the odd shark. They all pop up on home territory and move in regular patterns, shuttling up and down vertically and horizontally waiting for winged Wilf to blunder into them. There are some nice designs and reasonable animation and although the screens tend to be "chunky" they are mostly colourful and attractive.

SECOND OPINION

Not impressed by this. Some tolerable graphics – but nothing anywhere near special. Gameplay is simple and there aren't any real puzzles as such to solve. A pleasant jaunt, but not really deep enough these days.

PC

Negotiating the screens is mostly a matter of delicate flap control and good timing with most connections between screens being obvious and nothing to think about. Flying around picking up objects won't be everybody's cup of tea but the screens can get quite tough particularly with Wilf suffering from gravity symptoms every time you stop flapping.

To get between time zones Wilf has to collect all the pieces of amulet and then an additional one that appears after the others and transports him to the new zone. Once explored a section can be remembered and easily completed so that once cracked this won't hold much interest, particularly since there's no score except of the number of pieces collected.

The monotonous noise of wings flapping can soon be disposed of with no music to cheer the ear. However the main problem faced by the game is that it's showing its age in its gameplay. These days arcade adventures are on the scale of *Strangeloop* and simple exploration games just aren't in the same league.

BW

GOOD NEWS

- **About 60 screens making up six time zones.**
- **Some nice graphics with plenty of colour.**
- **Sections can be quite tough.**

BAD NEWS

- **Gameplay is dated.**
- **Little in the way of sound.**
- **Once a zone is explored it loses its challenge.**

GRAPHICS	63%
SONICS	12%
GRAB FACTOR	66%
STAYING POWER	55%
A A RATING	57%

PLAY YOUR CARDS RIGHT

Britannia Software, £7.95 cass, keys only

The computer game takes exactly the same format as the TV show but with the twin reliefs of not having to watch Brucie's mug or be told it's nice to see you. The games can be played against the computer or another player but a human opponent will be more interesting.

To start with a simple question is put to the players, usually regarding the intimate or humourous escapades of 100 married couples, single men, vicars etc. The player then has to guess how many of the hundred gave a particular answer after which player two says whether he thinks the number is higher or lower than that guess. The one who gets nearest gets first crack at stage two.

This is a row of five playing cards which have to be turned over by predicting whether the next card will be higher or lower than its predecessor. If you get to the end of the row the game is won. Failure will let the other player have a go and the questions and answers sessions go on until one player has won two games.

He now moves to the final stage where on TV you go for a prize. Here you just go for a high score. You start with 200 points and 11 cards arranged in rows of one, three, three and four from the top down. The first of the four cards is turned over and you bet points on the turn of the next card, doubling them if you correctly predict whether its higher or lower and losing them if you don't. This continues up the rows until you finally win the car...I mean end the game on the last card.

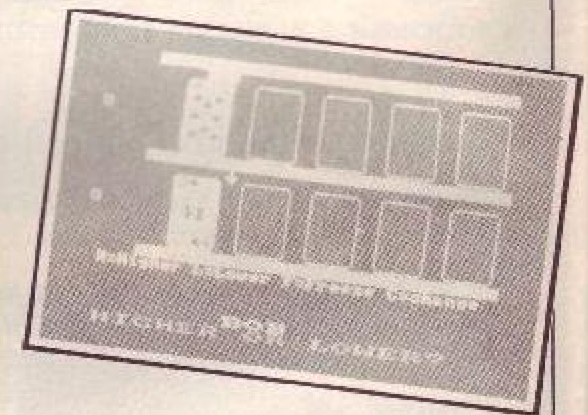
The graphics and sound are unmemorable, the card prediction relies merely on the law of averages and although the questions may raise the odd smile it ruins the effect when you haven't got an audience of TV vegetables screaming "higher, higher!" In some questions the structure is such that it's impossible to know whether you're supposed to be guessing how many people said yes, no or twice on Sundays.

BW

SECOND OPINION

Brucie's software debut is unlikely to win the ratings battle for Brittania. It's dire. If you must do licensing deals then at least licence something worth licensing.

PC



Higher, higher, lower, higher, lower

GOOD NEWS

- **Brucie is confined to the title screen.**
- **Fans of the show may enjoy it.**

BAD NEWS

- **The whole thing relies on guesswork and the law of averages – no skill.**
- **The meaning of the questions is sometimes unclear.**
- **There are no prizes, which is the whole point of game shows (for the public anyway).**

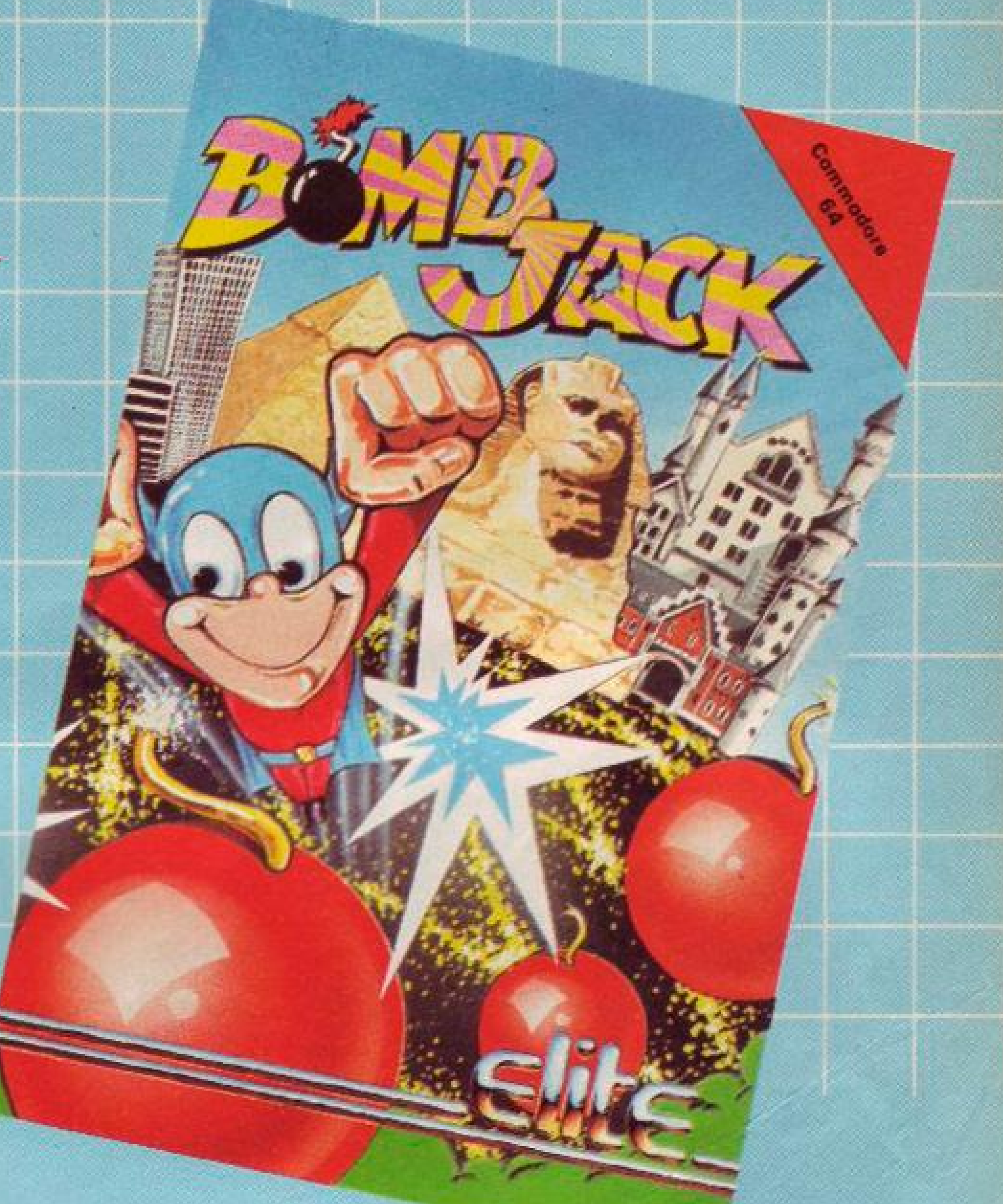
GRAPHICS	28%
SONICS	43%
GRAB FACTOR	41%
STAYING POWER	26%
A A RATING	34%

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DALEY THOMPSON'S SUPER-TEST

Ocean, £8.95 cass, joystick only

By now many of you may be sick of the sight of sporting games needing a good waggle, but this follow up to *DT's Decathlon* has eight new events that you may not be able to resist playing. These certainly aren't Daley's olympic specialities but an athlete like him can take on any challenge – even ski jumping.

The game loads in two parts with four events in each. The first day's events are pistol shooting, cycling, spring board diving and giant slalom. Having sweated over them you can move on to rowing, penalties, ski jump and tug o' war to round off the muscle mauling. The two days are played as individual games and you don't need to complete day one to play day two.



Daley prepares to launch himself into the pool

SECOND OPINION

By now I'm sick of the sight of sporting games needing a good waggle. There's just no interest in the physical effort required. Of course, if waggling turns you on this game will please you – I can't deny that it's very well done with some pleasing graphics and animation. It's just that I found it a bore.

PC

The first event is pistol shooting and. This is the only one which requires no waggling – just a good eye and fast reactions. Daley appears at the bottom of the screen with six revolving targets in front of him. One of these will flick into view – cross has to be homed in on it and a bullet fired before the target disappears again. There are ten bullets to be fired and three chances to attain the qualifying score. Failure will lose one of Daley's three lives, to the accomapaniment of a delightful little tune.

After this skill-testing event there's a straightforward waggle at cycling. You only get one chance to cycle down the course within a time limit while the animated character on screen whizzes his legs around like a wild thing. Test number three gets you back to good timing with a spring board dive. Here you have to time bounces on the board to gain height and then waggle furiously to make as many somersaults before trying to make a graceful entry into the water. Three dives are allowed and the scores for each are added together to try to beat a qualifying score.

The diving is quite a tough event to master and is followed by another difficult task, the giant slalom. Here you have to zig-zag down a course as it scrolls up the screen. The skier is started off and speeded up by a bout of waggling and then steered left and right through the slalom gates. The course has to be completed inside a time limit and there are only two chances to do it. Sharp turns and hitting flags will slow the skier down while missing a gate or skiing off the edge of the course disqualifies him.

Day two opens in vigorous style with a

THINK!

Ariolasoft, £8.95 cass, joystick or keys

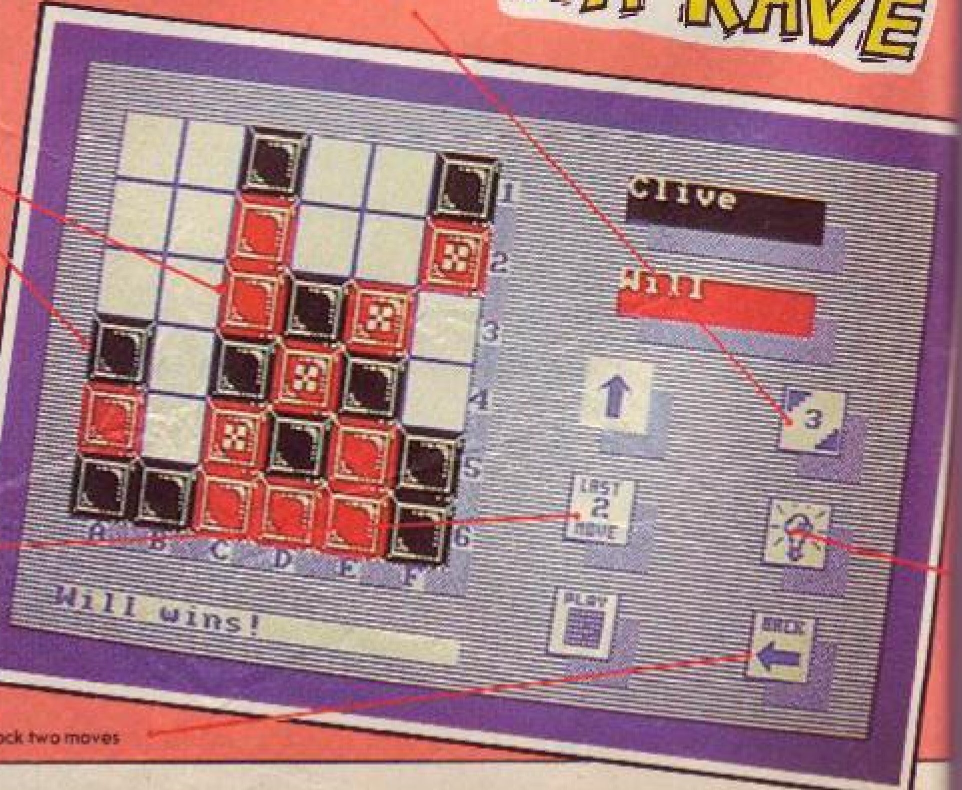
Let's get the predictable bit over with first – YES, it does make you think. This sort of puzzle game has been noticeable by its absence on the Amstrad but anyone looking for a mental challenge that doesn't involve arcade adventuring – just logic and analysis – will be more than happy.

The rules of the game are very simple, but as with games like Othello and Chess learning the rules is the easy part, discovering the tactics and strategies is another. The game takes place on a 6x6 grid onto which counters can be pushed by the two players. The counters can be pushed on from the right hand or bottom edges of the grid and when they are the row or column they're pushed into moves along one square.

The aim is to get four counters in a line horizontally, vertically or diagonally before your opponent. He can be the computer on one of seven difficulty levels or a human opponent against whom several different types of game can be played. The computer opponent plays a good game on all seven levels of play, taking a long time to move on 5-7 but playing fast and well on level four in particular.

The player can take as long as he likes to move against the computer and against such a logical silicon mind that time is needed to analyse all the possible moves. The early decisions are easy but once five or six counters are on the board things start to get very complicated. It's practically impossible to fill the whole board with counters without somebody winning but even if you should manage it play continues because counters just disappear off the top and left of the grid when pushed off.







rowing contest against the computer. The two competitors paddle horizontally across the screen with the player having two tasks. The first is to beat a qualifying time while the second is to beat the computer rower for a bonus score.

Off the water and onto the football field now for some spot kicks. The computer defends a goal on the right of the screen with a goalkeeper while a player on the left has to step up and try to whack five balls past it. The strength of the kick is built up by waggling as the player runs in and then the direction and height of the ball by the timing of the pressing of the fire button and how long it's held down for. There's a qualifying score with points being awarded for each kick.

G O O D   N E W S

- Eight different events.
- Excellent graphics and animation.
- Good range of tunes.
- Both skill and power are needed.
- Events are challenging and get tougher.

B A D   N E W S

- Guaranteed to test your joystick to the limit.
- Another in the long line of sports/waggling games.

Ski jumping isn't your everyday sporting event but here there are three chance to achieve a qualifying distance. The screen shows three views: a close-up of the skier a side view of the whole slope and a top view of it as well. As the skier starts his descent waggling builds up his power and a timely press of the fire button launches him off the bottom of the slope. He now flies through the air with the greatest of ease until the ground comes rushing towards him. A safe landing can be achieved by timing a press on the fire button again but otherwise you hit hard and with legs and arms flailing roll into a large snowball.

The last challenge is the tug o'war where eight opponents await you in a waggle to the finish. On the first run through you only have to take on the easiest man but in later rounds the heavier, stronger men have to be faced. After completing four events on either day you start them again but with the qualifying scores and times made harder.

The graphics and animation are slick, smooth and colourful while the musical accompaniment is varied and tuneful. Each event has been well thought out and developed to make them playably addictive but tough too. A most enjoyable bash with plenty of variety in events and skills.

BW

GRAPHICS	82%
SONICS	80%
GRAB FACTOR	86%
STAYING POWER	84%
A A RATING	85%

Give it some stick

The art of playing waggling games is to find a joystick and style that will not only bring you success in the game but keep the equipment in one piece for as long as possible. Everyone has their own personal favourite stick and method but here are a few hints if you've been having problems.

The type of joystick is the most important thing and there are several important criteria.

Handle length: long sticks have to travel over a great distance and the only effective way of waggling is to hold the stick at the base between thumb and index finger. Short sticks work much better as you can get quicker movement and a better grip on them.

Fire buttons: need to be easily operated in the middle of waggling but not accidentally so, therefore big positive-feel buttons are best (not triggers or top fire buttons).

Base switches: these are the switches inside the joystick base which are activated by the stick to control movement. The ones that give a very positive click when used (Quickshot, JY2) can't be operated all that fast, but microswitches or leaf switches (Kempston, TAC 2, Wico and many others) can operate much faster, depending on the rest of the construction of course.

Construction: you can't expect a relatively cheap joystick like a standard Atari or Quickshot 1 to take much of a hammering, but the more expensive varieties ought to be built to last. The base is also important – you can't expect base suckers to hold a stick down so the most successful types seem to be a base that can be easily held down with your non-waggling hand either on the table or your lap.

My personal favourites are the Kempston Competition Pro/Formula One and the Suncom Tac 2 but you'll probably have to shop around to find the right joystick to suit your style and needs.

The game selections before and during the game are made using single keystrokes and icons. There are plenty of options that will allow you to change the program in many ways. The most important is the two player option where the players can have special games of speed and blitz think. Speed think sets a time limit on each individual move, exceeding which forfeits that move, and blitz think sets a limit for the whole game and if either player's runs out they lose the game.

There are also tutorial and solve games in which the computer teaches you the game by marking your moves in a game or sets you problems to solve respectively. Tutorial is annoying in the extreme since it doesn't always let you play the best move – computers don't always know best. The problems are more fun: all six of them can be solved in two moves by player one but finding the solution can be quite tough.

SECOND OPINION

A very impressive piece of work. In fact, it's the first board game I've ever seen on a computer – any computer – which plays better on the machine than the living room table. It's easy to get in to, but gets very difficult on higher levels. And the speed option is nerve-wracking. The pleasant display and the numerous options available make it a game that you're bound to play again and again.

PC

There are lots of other options available. On the main menu you can change the counter colours or have a green screen setting, put the sound on or off and load or save the game. Both main displays are attractively presented but the sound is a single beep which is best turned off.

The options within the game are more interesting and allow you to indulge in some underhand tactics. There are level and last move indicators, the former of which can be changed and the latter used in long games where you've got time to make the tea to check up on what the computer's been up to. There's a function where the computer will suggest the next move for you and one where you can force the computer to play the next move. The nicest option is the one where you can take the game back two moves at a time if a losing situation looks like coming up.

When the game is won or lost a replay of all the moves can be shown and a quick analysis made of where you went wrong or right. You can even use the solve option to set up a position for analysis or to challenge another human player to crack it.

G O O D   N E W S

- Very easy to pick up.
- Lots of logical and analytical thought required.
- Plenty of options to maintain interest.
- Speed and blitz games add a new dimension to the action.
- Two player games can be quite a battle of wits.

B A D   N E W S

- Pathetic sound.
- No scoring system except in the annoying tutorial mode.





STRANGELOOP

The massive, desolate factory that services the **EARTH** orbits silently in the vast **DARK WASTES** of space.

STRANGE THINGS have been observed from **EARTH**, very strange indeed as there are **NO HUMANS** on the factory, it is maintained and controlled by a clever series of **ROBOTS**, programmed only to serve.

How could the **ROBOTS** possibly be **SABOTAGING** happenings on **EARTH** unless they are somehow being **REPROGRAMMED?** Intrepid investigation is the only way to find out exactly what is going on...and it must be **YOU!**

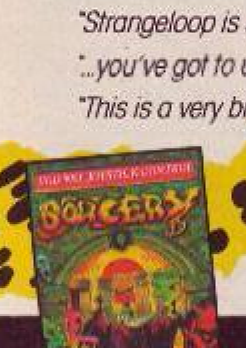
250 rooms of **EXPLORATION, PUZZLES** to resolve and **CURIOUS ROBOTS** to meet. **GRAPHICALLY STUNNING**, full of **ACTION** and **AMUSING** encounters, this is arcade adventuring at its absolute peak.

This what they were saying about **STRANGELOOP** before they even saw this version

"Strangeloop is unique, graphically impressive, vast, and devious; in short, brill..." **Personal Computing Weekly.**

"...you've got to use your brain as well as your joystick...Strangeloop graphics are superb...a real Screen Star if ever I saw one" **Commodore User**

"This is a very big and superior arcade adventure...an elegantly designed game" **Your Commodore.**



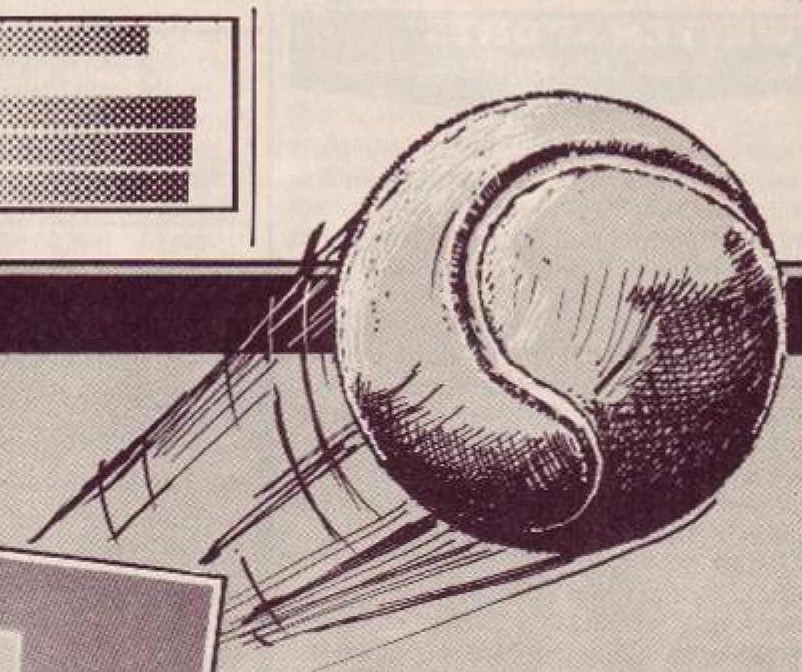
Remember "SORCERY", this year's most ACCLAIMED title for the AMSTRAD? Well VIRGIN GAMES' unrivalled reputation for AMSTRAD software is upheld again with the Gang of Five's latest MASTERPIECE.



It's a well presented game with plenty of options and of course endless variation in the games that can be played. Its only flaw is in the lack of a scoring system for the contests but many happy hours will be spent sliding counters even if the tally has to be kept on paper.

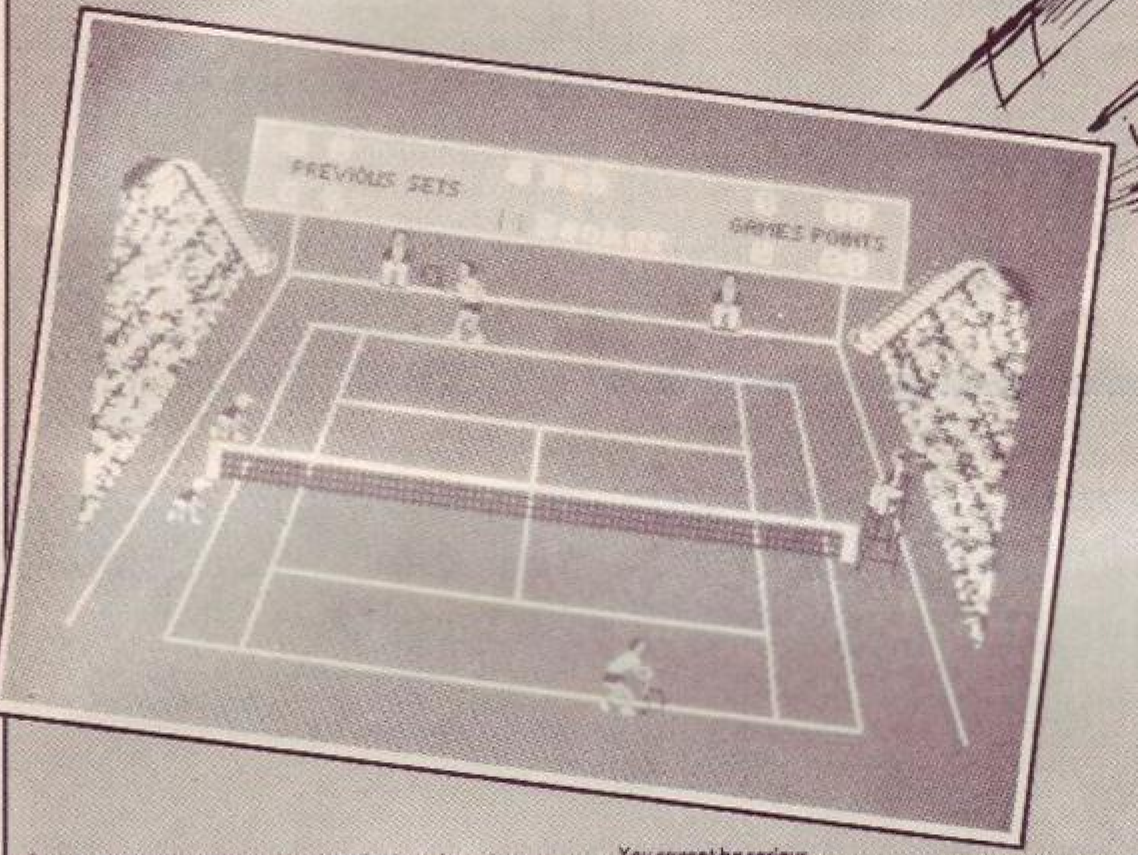
BW

GRAPHICS	63%
SONICS	5%
GRAB FACTOR	82%
STAYING POWER	81%
A A RATING	80%



MATCH POINT

Psion, £7.95 cass, joystick or keys



You cannot be serious man, I cannot be losing like this

Only one other tennis simulation has been tried on Arnold and that was very dire, leaving a gap in the market for a decent attempt at the sport. That space has now been filled by this highly demanding but rewarding game which really does give you a taste of the difficulty and atmosphere of the real thing.

The whole of the tennis court is shown on the screen at once with a view from above and behind one end of it. This gives you a camera angle view of the proceedings with the umpire, ball boys, crowd and scoreboard all in sight. The court narrows at the top because of the perspective and this also has a major effect on the play, making the top end a lot harder to play at and judge the ball's arrival.

One or two player games can be played. The more intrepid can risk a drubbing by the computer while the lazy can sit and watch two computer players battle it out. The game can also be played on three levels: quarter final, semi-final and final. These are of increasing difficulty but against the computer even the first level is extremely tough.

Games are played over five sets and follow all of the rules of tennis including tie-breaks and end changes. The breaks between games are very short but when you are serving you can leave the player bouncing the ball for as long as you like if you need a breather (wipe the sweat off your brow, change shirts or rackets etc).

Control of the player may at first seem limited since you can only move him around and press fire to swing the racket. However the skill involved is in the positioning of the player and the speed of the racket swing. Once this fine art has been learnt a wide range of shots can be played although I haven't managed to execute a lob or drop shot yet. As well as the timing of shots a tactical sense is needed, as in the real game. Your shots should be played to keep the other player on the run and playing defensively rather than let him dominate the net and play outright winning strokes that you can't reach.

SECOND OPINION

This is a very attractive game, marred only by the virtual impossibility of ever thrashing your computer opponent. Well, you could try the McEnroe tactics, but I'm afraid the umpire always turns a deaf ear. Of course, that does mean you won't be fined either. Against another humanoid, things are a lot more sensible.

PC

While you are rushing around the court after the ball the computer will automatically switch from forehand to backhand but I found this often didn't work well and that manual control over the racket using the fire button was far more reliable. Now you've got all that information and a few practice games under your belt try taking on the computer and see just how good you've got to get.

Even on the easiest quarter final level the computer is tough but you should soon be able to take the odd game off him and in time perhaps even a set. To do so there are two main tactics to perfect – the serve/volley game where you charge into the net or baseline tactics where you wear down the opponent with long rallies. With either tactic the important thing to remember is that while moving forward on the serve or shot as you swing extra speed is put on the ball, thus giving you better chances of beating your opponent.

If the challenge of playing the computer is too much then a human opponent should provide more balanced opposition and close exciting games are much more likely to result. On the whole it's a good simulation, it's a pity the computer opponent doesn't have a slightly easier level. It does, though, provide a lasting challenge. I don't think anyone will ever beat the computer on final level – it's just too fast.

BW

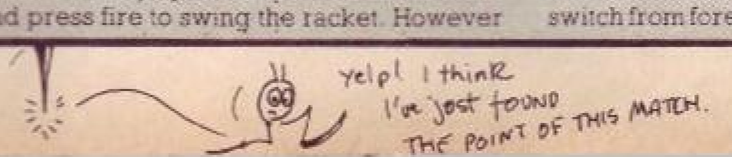
GOOD NEWS

- **Very tough computer opponent.**
- **Excellent two player action.**
- **Very realistic and skilful simulation.**
- **Nice touch when the ball boys pick up balls hit into the net.**

BAD NEWS

- **Solitary players will spend a very long time trying to master the game.**
- **If you aren't a tennis fan forget it.**

GRAPHICS	69%
SONICS	32%
GRAB FACTOR	68%
STAYING POWER	75%
A A RATING	71%



WINTER SPORTS

Electric Dreams, £9.95 cass, joystick or keys

It was only a matter of time before the sports simulation mania spread from the summer athletics action to the ice and snow frolics of winter. There are eight events to take part in and they load in five different sections from the tape.

The first three events are slalom, giant slalom and downhill and all three follow a similar format to simulate the skiing. The display is split into two with the left display showing the forward view and the right the overview. Below this are the control and speed indicators and above it the time and number of gates passed and failed.

The three events are very similar. In the slalom you have to ski around gates (marker flags), in the downhill you have to ski between gates and in the giant slalom the two are combined – you start by skiing through gates and then switch to slalom.

You have control over the left/right movement of the skier and over the speed down the slope. The left/right control can only be changed gradually so that a lot of forethought is required and the speed has to be watched carefully as the skier accelerates rapidly when facing straight downhill. This means excellent control is required to avoid missing gates.



Another lovely day on the piste

Once a gate is missed the skier has failed the run but he can continue to see what the rest of the course is like. If the run is successfully completed and the time is good enough it can be recorded in a high score table that is carried forward even when loading other events.

The action is slow for all three events but demands plenty of concentration to complete. Unfortunately this becomes repetitive after just a few plays and the frustration caused by crawling down the slope only to miss a late gate by a couple of pixels is extreme. The main problem is that there is no sense of urgency or excitement conjured up by the slow action, simple graphics and scratchy sound effects.

The ice hockey comes next and also suffers from the action being too slow. The pitch is shown in perspective and scrolls horizontally as play moves around. It is very similar to Anirog's *Slap Shot* but it's much slower and at the top of the screen is an overview of the whole rink. There is a two player option or you can take on the computer, both games being played over four periods of five minutes.

The ski jumping is a more demanding event requiring skill and faster reactions. The screen is again split into two with the left display a view down the slope and the right display a side view of the skier. He has to first be guided straight down the slope and then jumped of the end. While in the air his body position can be altered to gain maximum distance but trying to stay upright on landing. The graphics and sound are still uninspiring but the gameplay is more demanding.

SECOND OPINION

The graphics and sound on this long-awaited game were both so Spectrummy as to make me think the wrong version had somehow loaded on the Amstrad. The gameplay did not compensate for the deficiencies in presentation; all the events, with the exception of the bobsled, were very dull indeed. Add to this the tedious loading system and you've got a pretty disappointing program.

PC

Speed skating is back to a good old fashioned waggle or key hammering along courses from 500 to 10,000 metres. The split screen action is quite nicely animated and the ability to have two players can introduce excitement but the game control is rather baffling. Finding the right waggling technique is difficult but it seems to be a matter of timing rather than going as fast as possible. The longer races can last a very long time and the main problem is that it is impossible to build up a really big lead – you can only ever get a few metres ahead.

The bobsled is the most interesting event, with yet another split screen showing the view from above and behind the bob. It has to be guided down a course taking corners with you controlling speed and left/right movement. The graphics are again better for this event with enough speed and difficulty to make it a tough challenge.

The last event is the biathlon combining skiing and shooting. The skiing is a laborious waggling affair across some very picturesque backgrounds. Every few screens some targets have to be shot within a time

ONE MAN AND HIS DROID

Mastertronic, £1.99 cass, joystick or keys

One of the best named games of the year – OK, there's not much of it gone – with one of the weirdest scenarios to go with it. It's set on an alien planet where, accompanied by your faithful droid, you have to round up Ramboids – a form of alien sheep. The droid does all the work of course. You just have to guide him around.

The droid starts his task underneath a large cavern in which are hundreds of free Ramboids. He has to work his way up through them to get to an exit which will lead into another cavern. The free ramboids are arranged in horizontal lines with gaps randomly placed. The lines move in different directions so that the droid has to weave his way through to the top.

The problem is that if he takes too long the lines stop moving sideways and move down taking the droid to the bottom of the cavern. He also ends up back at the bottom if he strays over to the edges of the cavern where a moving belt will force him down. Once he's free the droid has to head for a



Stuck in a cavern with a load of silly Ramboids

limit before getting back to the trek. Again it suffers from the skiing being too slow to raise any excitement.

The main gripes with the game are its lack of speed, painful loading, and pathetic sound. Although you're getting eight events for the money and some are pretty challenging it still leaves me unexcited by the whole thing.

BW

G O O D N E W S

- **Eight events.**
- **Some difficult games to complete.**

B A D N E W S

- **Most games are too slow for the gameplay to be interesting.**
- **The sound effects are very basic.**
- **The loading system isn't much fun.**
- **Too much attention seems to have been paid to pretty backgrounds and not enough to the gameplay.**

GRAPHICS	40%
SONICS	16%
GRAB FACTOR	47%
STAYING POWER	60%
AA RATING	48%

ZANIA

Myrddin/Screens Microcomputer, £14.95 disk only, joystick or keys

Disk only games are still in their infancy on Arnold but already it is becoming clear that it is very much the future for bigger and better programs. This arcade adventure is set on a large, detailed scrolling background where our chunky hero, Percy Veer has to recover a lost chest of gold.

Despite Percy's corny name the land which he wanders around is realistically and attractively presented. There are many colourful and well drawn features that can be walked in front of, behind or over but the most impressive thing is the use of perspective. The landscape has real depth so that when Percy walks into it he gets smaller and when he walks towards you he gets larger.

When PV does walk up and down he does it in diagonal directions and this can prove inconvenient when you're trying to walk around or into things. When Perce tries to walk off the edge of the screen (or sometimes before that) the screen will scroll in whichever direction he's headed, accompanied by the constant whirring of the disc drive.

Now PV can get about the place he'll find objects which can be picked up although he can only carry two at a time. Each object is used for allowing you to enter a new area of the game although some of the connections are extremely weird. For instance, a telephone lets you approach a castle via a path while an apple lets you walk over a bridge.

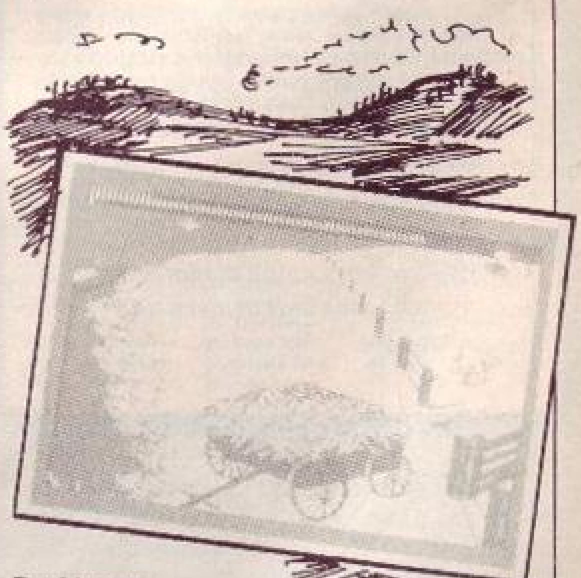
SECOND OPINION

There were some excellent graphics in this game – colourful, detailed, realistic. Unfortunately, the gameplay just doesn't live up to them. There was little to do beyond ducking the birdies and picking up the bizarre objects that gain access to other sections of the game. Sad really, because I had the feeling that it wasn't far away from being a real success.

PC

This means that most of the problems in the game have to be solved by trial and error rather than deduction, detracting greatly from the interest. Much frustrating time is spent trying out different objects, which you sometimes can't identify, only to find the answer is completely illogical.

There are quite a number of areas to be opened up, all in the same manner but with a different object each time. If you aren't carrying the right thing it's indicated by the border



The picturesque landscape of Zania

flashing red but if you are it turns green, allowing you to pass. Sometimes these sections take you behind objects where you can't see what Percy is doing and here the computer takes over automatically taking him through to the new area.

The only threat to Percy are the birds that flap about. They're rather slower than Hitchcock's film variety but are even more vicious. They sap the strength gauge which

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tunnel where an automatic function will take him to the next stage of the game.

This next stage is the real nitty gritty of the action and after a couple of levels gets pretty difficult. Here you have to shepherd Ramboids into a teleporter in the right order. There are seven of these wooly wonders circulating in the maze-like caverns and at least four have to be dumped in the teleporter in the right order. Getting them there at all is the hard part.

SECOND OPINION

I really liked the fairground organ sound, and found the graphics attractive enough – despite their simplicity. The gameplay I could take or leave. And not just because it's difficult. The trouble is that the task is very similar throughout the game – if you're not really hooked at the very beginning, you're unlikely to become so by sticking at it.

PC

The sheep follow movement patterns around the tunnels and corridors and have to be bumped, diverted, pushed or plain forced into going in the right direction. There are two basic types of movement pattern but either will prove tricky to deal with.

To aid the droid in his task he has three types of movement which he can use to get around the maze. The one for general use is flying, so that he can go in any direction. Digging allows him to disappear into the floor while tunneling allows him to burrow horizontally through the rock walls and join up areas of the maze.

A timer gradually ticks down as you try to capture the Ramboids, giving you a total game time of 20 minutes in which to complete your task. If you manage that a time bonus is given before proceeding to the next level. Each of the 20 levels can be accessed by a password that is revealed when the previous stage is completed.

Each level is a real test of logic and skill that may take many attempts to solve while the sheep are, of course, as stroppy and obstinate as possible. Some are complicated by other items that can get in the way like brick blocks that can go into the teleporter.

The game requires patience and logic and while the graphics and sound won't knock you sideways the addictiveness lies in the puzzling. With 20 caverns there is plenty of lasting challenge and with speed always of the essence things can get hectic.

BW

G O O D N E W S

- **20 different and difficult levels.**
- **Some tough puzzling and logic needed.**
- **You can work through using passwords and start from scratch to get high scores.**

B A D N E W S

- **Gets frustrating if you can't work out a level.**
- **The logical puzzles won't suit all.**

GRAPHICS	58%
SONICS	70%
GRAB FACTOR	70%
STAYING POWER	68%
AA RATING	72%

ends the game if it reaches zero. Immunity to their slow-motion attacks is provided by a supply of capsules that are available in only a limited supply.

It's an admirable effort towards breaking new ground in disk software but still needs improvements before it becomes a good game. The graphics are excellent but the limited nature of the gameplay and lack of sound (just a few bird tweet noises) leave something to be desired. This is certainly the way software should be heading but as yet it's still a lot of money to pay for a product that isn't quite right.

BW

GOOD NEWS

- **Large playing area.**
- **Good graphics and perspective effect.**
- **Hopefully a sign of better things to come.**

BAD NEWS

- **Gameplay relies on trial and error – not good in an adventure.**
- **Very little sound.**
- **Diagonal up and down movement can prove frustrating.**

GRAPHICS	77%
SONICS	11%
GRAB FACTOR	62%
STAYING POWER	51%
A A RATING	56%

CONTRAPTION

Icon/Audiogenic, £7.95 cass, joystick or keys

Mad professors once tried to rule the world or bring dead bodies back to life but the star of this game contents himself with feeding golden apples to his Contraption. What it actually does isn't clear but it really gets through those apples, making your job of collecting them very tough indeed.

There are ten screens on each of which four apples have to be picked up before passing on to the contraption to deposit them. Collecting the apples takes the form of good old platform action but it takes place on some refreshingly devious and colourful screens. Each screen is packed with hazards and has a desperately short time limit that will demand perfection from the player.

The contraption is on a separate screen that appears after every game screen, making 20 screens in all to get through. Once you work out how to fill the contraption with apples it becomes quite easy to complete each time but the other game screens are diabolically difficult.

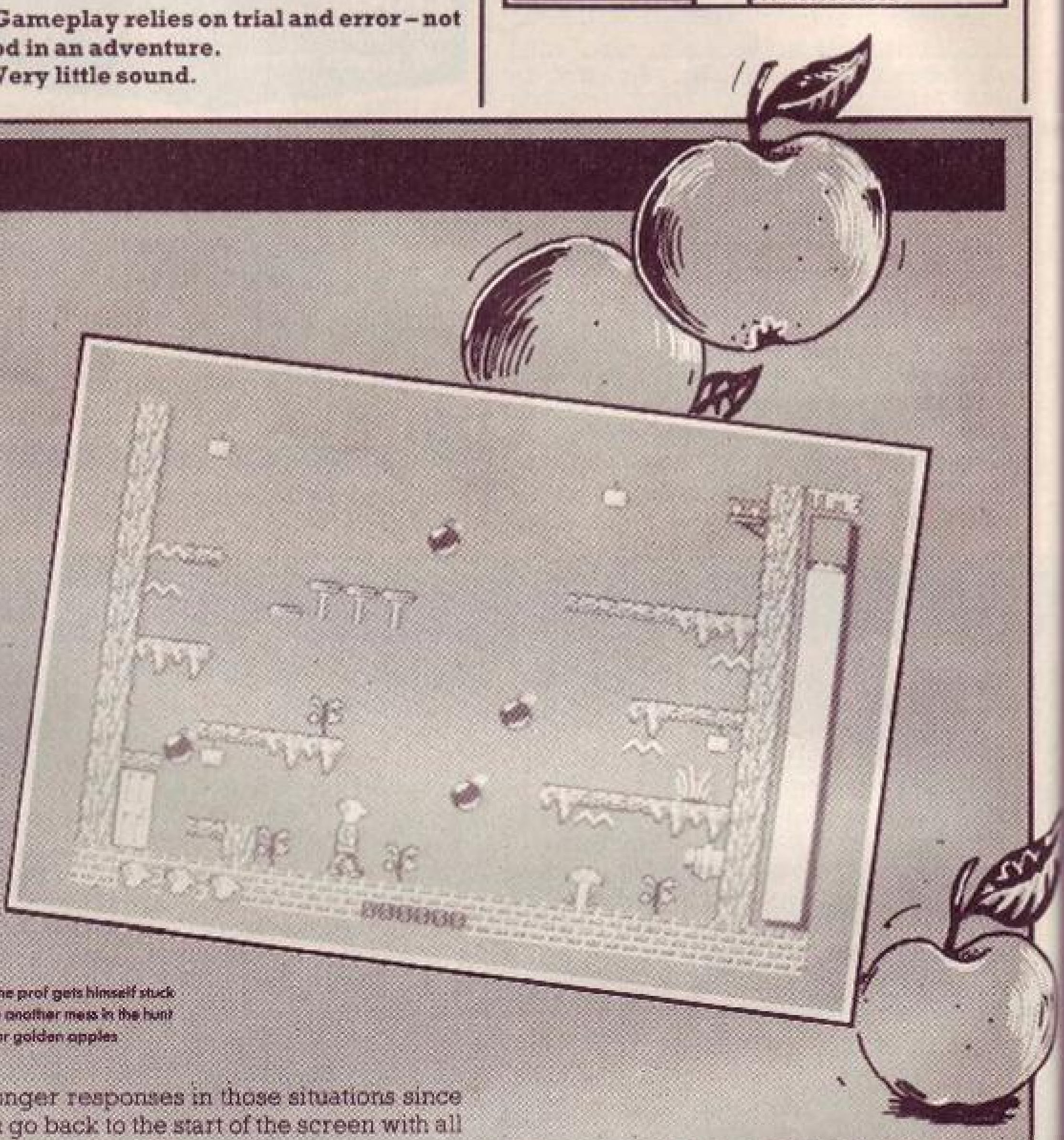
SECOND OPINION

The graphics seemed to me just about the prettiest I've ever seen on the Amstrad. Initially that's enough to make you love the game. But evidently the programmers have used so much memory to get them in that there isn't enough left for a large number of screens. So, although you get a very attractive and very tough platform game, it hasn't quite got the legs to make it an all-time classic AA Rave.

PC

The professor only has the standard left, right and jump controls and using these he must avoid all sorts of deadly plant life, animals and even a killer snowman. This all comes down to good timing and positioning which is where the pause facility comes in handy for planning your route. The plants are the most important thing to find out about since some of them will kill you but others can be a handy platform to leap off.

Most of the hazards move in regular patterns either up and down or across screen and to get past them there will be only one succesful path. Collision with deadly objects or a long drop loses one of the professor's three lives and is accompanied by a speech bubble saying "silly me". I can think of a lot stronger responses in those situations since you go back to the start of the screen with all the apples to collect again.



The prof gets himself stuck in another mess in the hunt for golden apples

One of the nicest touches is the pistons that pump up and down like valves on a trumpet and have to be walked on or used to boost you up on the contraption screen. The other graphics are of an equally high standard and although there isn't much animation everything is colourful and well drawn. There is still a problem when characters overlap but this doesn't happen toooften. The one time you really notice it is when using the lifting platforms that are on many screens – sometimes the prof's feet sink into it because of the timing of your walking onto the platform.

The best graphic is saved for the end of a game where the professor is crushed by a large apple as it snaps off a branch and plummets down the screen. A large bouncing "contraption" sign is also nicely done and the other titles include a demo of all the screens. The sound is less impressive, with no music and simple effects for jumping and dying.

The graphics are very distinctive, revealing the BBC origination of the game, and although the gameplay is fairly ordinary it's a nice little package that would have been all the more impressive for a few more screens. The ones there are tough enough but perhaps just a little frustrating when you get too stuck.

BW

GOOD NEWS

- **Very colourful and attractive graphics.**
- **Tough screens to complete.**
- **Nice touches like pistons, end game apple and bouncing contraption.**

BAD NEWS

- **Little in the way of sound.**
- **Screens may become frustrating.**
- **11 screens isn't a lot for a platform game.**

GRAPHICS	86%
SONICS	20%
GRAB FACTOR	77%
STAYING POWER	61%
A A RATING	72%



CASTLE ASSAULT
Blue Ribbon, £2.50, keys only

Let's get one thing straight from the start. This is not, as the blurb claims, a "truly stunning and imaginative game". It's barely OK, and even then I suspect I'm being a little generous.

What you have to do is get to the top of the castle walls which fill each of the screens. Each wall consists of four levels: on two of them you have to jump over things, while on the other two you have to hop on moving platforms.

On the lowest level there are purple frogs(?) in pits who periodically leap up and down. If you clear them you ascend a ladder and try to hop on a rapidly moving platform. Get to the top of the screen and you go on to the next wall. Which looks remarkably like the first.

SECOND OPINION

Please, please, please take this game away from me before I batter the keyboard to pieces. This is the sort of frustrating, infuriating and annoying game that once passed for addictive. In truth they are just small games that have to be manically hard to play so that you're hard pressed to get off the first screen. With such horrible control it's just as well there's no joystick option – I'd have snapped mine in frustration.

BW

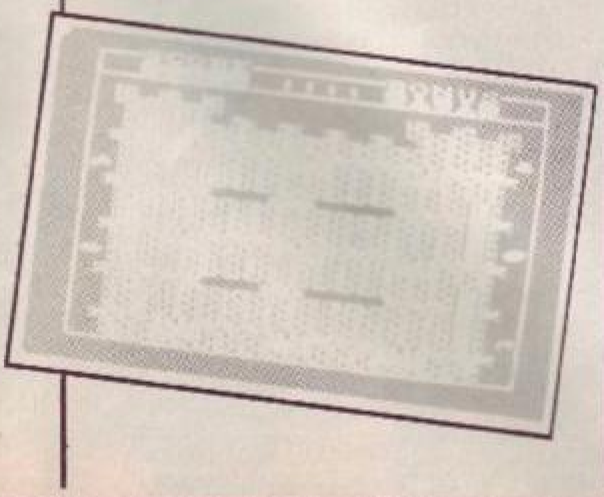
But now you're faced with the additional problems of rocks dropping down and a rampaging duck patrolling the screen. As on screen 1 the whole technique involves timing your movements correctly. Exciting it isn't: frustrating it is.

Graphically the game is not exactly state-of-the-art, but that wouldn't be such a drawback for a budget label if the task were rather more interesting. Sadly, *Castle Assault* is pretty dull.

PC

G O O D   N E W S

- **Frustrating – if you like that kind of thing.**



B A D   N E W S

- **Hard to control.**
- **Tedious game task.**
- **Unimpressive graphics and sound.**

GRAPHICS	39%
SONICS	35%
GRAB FACTOR	27%
STAYING POWER	19%
A A RATING	22%

SCREWBALL
Blue Ribbon, £2.50, keys only

*Q*Bert* lives on in budget form on the Amstrad, although this clone has a couple of features that distinguish it from other versions.

Instead of the normal pyramidal structure of cubes the layout is instead rectangular. At first it is complete, but as you make your way through the screens more and more blocks disappear, leaving some dangerous holes for you to negotiate.



You, the eponymous Screwball, have to change the colour of each cube within 60 seconds or lose a life. You achieve this by bouncing around and landing on each square. Unfortunately, there are some very nasty black bugs around who not only sport bizarre fuzzy red hair-dos, but also do for you if you find yourself on the square as them.

However, not for nothing are you named Screwball. The lower half of your body is a corkscrew – a quick press on the space bar and you've whirled a hole into the block. You can then lure the stupid bugs on to them and send them to their doom. But beware – over-enthusiastic drilling can result in your penning yourself in.

Screwball is by no stretch of the imagination a great or an original game. But it has good enough graphics, sound and gameplay to keep you amused for at least a little while.

PC

SECOND OPINION

*It isn't the cheapest version of Q*Bert available on the Amstrad and it certainly isn't the best. The gameplay can be quite testing but there just isn't enough variety to keep it interesting. The hole-digging function was nice but after discovering that there's nothing else to get excited about.*

BW

G O O D   N E W S

- **Cute graphics.**
- **Very playable.**
- **Cheap.**

B A D   N E W S

- **Not very original.**
- **Not much staying power.**

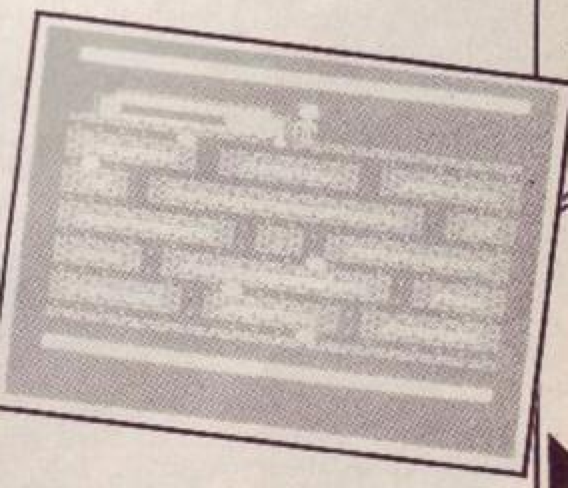
GRAPHICS	49%
SONICS	46%
GRAB FACTOR	43%
STAYING POWER	32%
A A RATING	40%

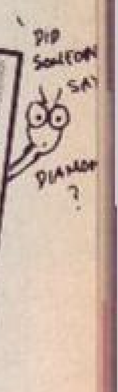
DIAMOND MINE
Blue Ribbon, £2.50, keys only

Diamond mines are unlikely to become a gamester's best friend. This game has an absurdly simple task to match the similarly simple sound and graphics. It will satisfy only those who've never seen a computer game or those who've seen so many that their sense of discrimination has become totally befuddled.

You stand at the top of a maze layout controlling a pipe which gobbles the diamonds (dots). Rushing around in the maze are hostile aliens (purple blobs). You can suck them up the end of the pipe, but if they touch any other point you lose a life. Controls are left/right, up/down and retract, which freezes the action and allows you to get back and gobble some aliens.

The whole – the *only* – interest of the





SECOND OPINION

Here we go again with a good old single screen game that tries not to be Pacman *by introducing some new elements and still ends up being* Pacman. *You might have some fun until you've completed a screen but after that the feeling of deja vu will sweep over you causing drooping of the eyelids and stagnating of the brain. These sort of games give budget labels a bad name.*

BW

game is in learning to press retract rather than a control key: going back on yourself loses a life. So you can have some fun for about 10 minutes. Once you've learned to control yourself the game is a bore, despite its 10 mazes.

PC

GOOD NEWS

▶ **Instant fun.**

BAD NEWS

▶ **The fun lasts about ten minutes.**

GRAPHICS	29%
SONICS	27%
GRAB FACTOR	40%
STAYING POWER	9%
A A RATING	27%

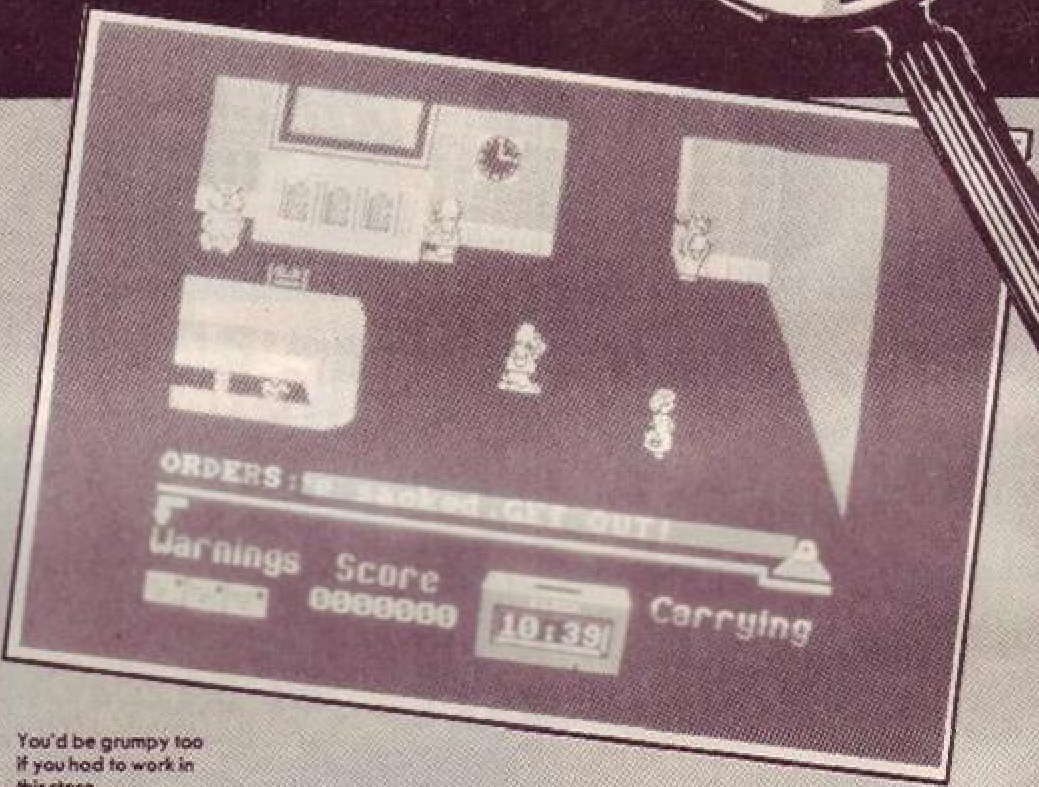


GRUMPY GUMPHREY SUPERSLEUTH

Gremlin Graphics, £8.95 cass, joystick or keys

Gumphrey has been aptly named because you don't have to be an ageing, short-sighted store detective to get very annoyed with the customers and staff in this particular department store. His task is to complete jobs in the store without getting himself sacked. Needless to say, everybody else seems determined to make life as hard as possible for him.

The store has five main floors made up of 39 screens which are connected by corridors, the main lift or an escalator. Each screen is shown in 3D with Grumpy able to walk in front of and behind the unattractively designed objects and shop counters. Grumpy is a well rounded figure who waddles about the place in search of something to do, and although the animation is good he and the other characters are too small for this to be appreciated properly.



You'd be grumpy too if you had to work in this store

SECOND OPINION

I have a lot of sympathy for Gumphrey, but the same things that make him grumpy made me unable to help him. The shoppers are infuriating. Why hasn't Gumph got a gun to shoot them?

PC

His tasks are many and varied but failure to complete any of them, particularly where the boss is concerned, is bad news. Early on in the working day of nine to five Grumpy will have to take the boss his tea and clear the shop of ducks (no I don't understand either so don't ask). Later on you may have to supply the boss with booze or even put out a fire.

All of the tasks can be completed with the 20 odd items that are found in the various departments. Grumpy can carry three at a time so knowing where each one is so he can get to them quickly is important. One particularly nice item is the skateboard that allows you to whizz about faster than usual – very handy. This is the adventuring element of the game and will cause some problems and hard thought to hold your interest.

If Grumpy fails to complete tasks, bumps into customers or generally incurs the bosses wrath his gauge will gradually run down – when exhausted it leads to a warning letter. Four of those and he's out on his ear without so much as a redundancy payment or pension. However, for every success his score goes up, as does the player's satisfaction rating.

Unfortunately, someone obviously had the idea of introducing shoppers who would hamper the tasks by generally getting in the way. This is where the gameplay falls down because they would drive anyone completely barmy. They make control difficult because they bounce you in all directions and are difficult to avoid because they're all over the place, usually three or four to a room, and I haven't found a way of repelling them.

They come in all shapes and sizes: old women who call you a clumsy oaf, hippies who stop you to tell you something of mind-numbing interest, pipesmokers who bounce you harder than Big Daddy and most annoyingly of all thieves who even knock the objects you are carrying out of your hands. There is no respite from this January sale madness and it spoiled the adventure element for me by making the whole thing immensely frustrating.

The package is otherwise very agreeable with plenty of tasks to complete, locations, objects, decent graphics and a nice title tune. Show me one more shoplifter though and I'll snap my joystick.

BW

GOOD NEWS

▶ **Good 3D graphics.**
▶ **Plenty of tasks and objects.**
▶ **Nice touches like skateboard.**

BAD NEWS

▶ **The shoppers are incredibly frustrating.**
▶ **Many graphics are too small and lack colour.**

GRAPHICS	64%
SONICS	51%
GRAB FACTOR	59%
STAYING POWER	77%
A A RATING	69%

WHO DARES WINS II

Alligata, £8.95 cass, joystick only

Don't worry – you haven't missed *Who dares wins I*. The title is because the original game was withdrawn after a legal dispute due to its similarity to an arcade game called *Commando*. The official conversion of that game is due out soon so it will be interesting to see how they compare.

The game really gets back to the arcade roots of killing everything in sight in a frantic battle of reflexes and speed. That would be enough for some, but *WDW* also has tremendous 3D graphics and backgrounds with a wide variety of screens and challenges. You control a man on a mission to capture enemy outposts and release captured prisoners. At first it seems like a variant on *Robotron* as you run around in circles zapping soldiers, but the more complicated nature of the game soon reveals itself.

There are eight enemy outposts and each one is reached by fighting through several other screens. These are all composed of many different landscape features including ruined buildings, trees, rivers, walls, foxholes, railway lines and fences. Whatever the features, you can bet there will be lots of soldiers and other things waiting to kill you.

The man you control and the enemy soldiers have the same armament of an automatic rifle and a limited supply of grenades. Rifle fire can be sprayed around in true Rambo style trying to hit anything that moves, while grenades can be used against a partially concealed soldier or enemy vehicle. All this killing will bump up the score and there are some nice bonuses to be had for blasting fast-moving soldiers at an outpost or rescuing prisoners.

The prisoner appears on some screens in front an executioner who after a few seconds will shoot him. You have to let the executioner have it first and will be rewarded by the prisoner waving happily at you before he ungratefully runs off and leavees you to face the wrath of the enemy on your own.

SECOND OPINION

They should have called it Rambotron*, since the old* Robotron *game crossed with the antics of the musclebound hero is what it basically is. And none the worse for that: lots of indiscriminate killing combined with excellent graphics makes this a game to satisfy anyone who's been longing for a good shoot-em-up amidst the flood of arcade adventures. It will provide quite a long-term challenge, but is easy enough to get in to for the the oldest of soldiers.*

PC

The intrepid, battle-hardened soldier can progress between screens at any time by walking off the top, but at the outpost every last one of the horde of enemy has to be wiped out to capture it. Getting killed on any screen will return you to the start of it with the enemy back to full strength.

There are a number of things that will aid progress. Rifle bullets are limitless in supply and even though grenades can run out there are supply balloons that drop in replacements. Grenades also have the advantage of killing over a wider radius and even when thrown by the enemy they can still destroy their own men.

The graphics are superb with 3D being used to great effect – you can use terrain features for cover against bullets and walk behind them as well. There is good use of colour and animation as well, particularly when vehicles travel across screen. The sound effects are suitably noisy and the title screen has a short version of the theme from *The Great Escape*.

Although the blasting and killing may not suit everyone the game is a great little package of graphics, sound, demanding gameplay and a variety of features. This should be a real winner with some real mean crossfire in the later stages and if you do conquer eight outposts, guess what happens? That's right – the same eight, only even harder.

BW

GOOD NEWS

- **Great fun blasting away at the enemy.**
- **Terrific 3D graphics, characters and colour.**
- **Eight outposts comprising several screens each.**
- **Some really tough screens against**

SPELLBOUND

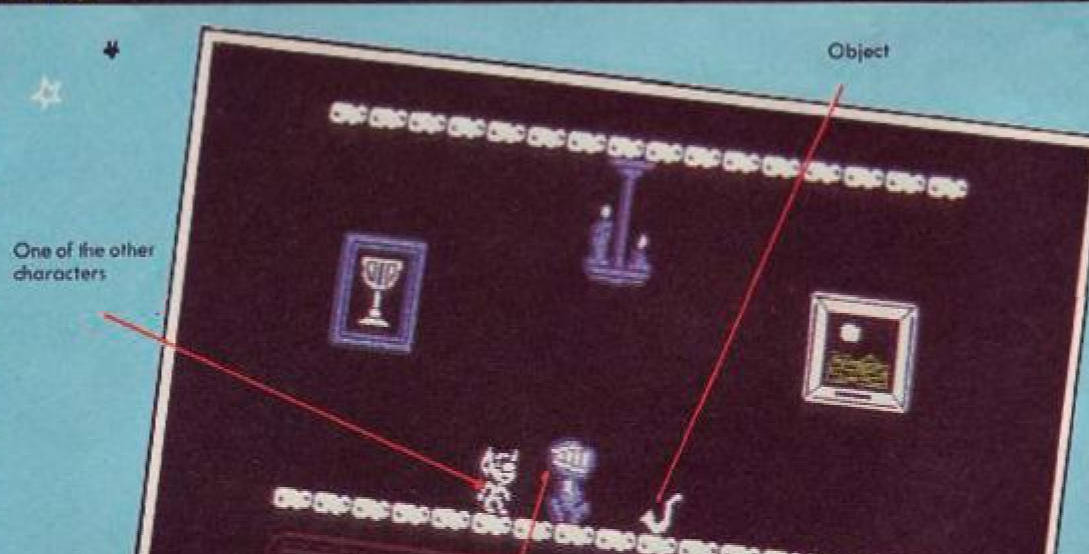
Mastertronic's Added Dimension, £2.99 cass, joystick or keys

The MAD games are a new range from Mastertronic that reflect the company's growing prominence in the market. Despite the increase in price the game is still £5 cheaper than most "full price" software and puts many such titles to shame. It's an arcade adventure that really lives up to the "adventure" label and features a new system called "windimation".

You take the role of the Magic Knight (hero of *Finders Keepers*) whose task is to rescue your master Gimbal and seven other people from the Castle of Karn. It's all Gimbal's fault, of course, and you have to release him from a white-out before returning the seven others to their space/time zones (home sweet home!) This is of course diabolically difficult and involves a good deal of devious puzzling.

The castle is made up of flick-screen rooms viewed from the side. Each one is mostly bare except for colourful and detailed ornaments and plants. There are also the standard smattering of objects and characters, which are what occupy most of Magic Knight's time.

The window menus are how all the adventure aspects of the game are controlled when he isn't walking between locations or making prodigious leaps. They are pulled into view over the game screen and have a wealth of options which can be accessed. The main menu has the usual commands to pick up and drop objects, you can carry up to five depending on their weight. MK can also take objects from or give them to other characters

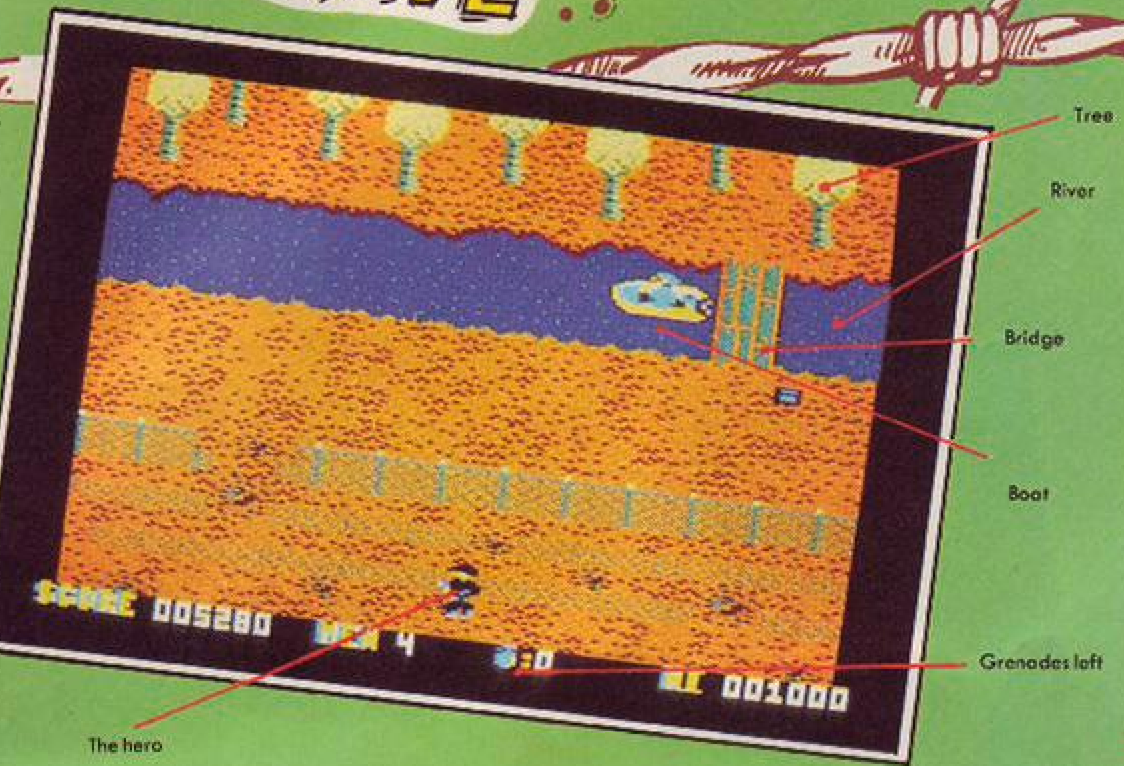


in order to perform a task.

Objects can be examined to reveal whether they might have something interesting to be read, their weight and whether they have magical powers. It's not just objects that can be examined but characters and MK as well. This reveals their physical attributes of strength, happiness, stamina, spell power and food level. Poor old MK has to worry about all the other characters as well as himself so that everybody has to be kept well fed and healthy. If MK or any of the others dies then the game finishes. You're also up against a 48 hour time limit – not real time!

There are some objects and locations that introduce new commands to the main menu and this can be extended till it nearly

AA RAVE



Fancy features

As you progress through the game there are several special features that crop up to make life difficult.
BOATS, TRAINS and JEEPS: these go across screen at different moments and can't do you any damage but can be grenaded for bonuses.
TANKS: shuttle left and right and fire bullets down the screen at you.
BOMBERS: these move horizontally across the screen and release bombs that act in exactly the same way as grenades.
FIGHTERS: these fly down the screen strafing the ground with two streams of tracer fire that can cut you down.
SNIPERS: lurk in foxholes and pop up from time to time to shoot at you.
WATER, MARSH and PITS: must be avoided or you'll fall in and lose a life.
MORTARS: operated by a soldier and act like grenades but with unlimited supply and more rapid fire.

murderous enemy crossfire.
- **Good variety of game features and screen design.**

B A D N E W S

- **May not suit those who dislike violent games.**
- **Can be frustrating having to start a screen from scratch.**

GRAPHICS	85%
SONICS	68%
GRAB FACTOR	85%
STAYING POWER	82%
A A RATING	83%

AA RAVE

The magnificent eight

There are eight other characters that will be encountered and you'll need to get to know them well.
GIMBAL: the careless wizard who got you into this mess and has to be released from a white-out.
THOR: wants his hammer back and might help you out with a lift.
FLORIN THE DWARF: cute little fellow who proves to be a tower of strength when given a bottle.
SAMSUN THE STRONG: strong but stupid.
ELRAND HALFELVEN: not always helpful so you may need to put him to sleep.
LADY ROSMAR: moves around a lot, particularly in the lift.
THE BANSHEE: you don't want him to appear too soon because you have to lose an item to get him.
ORIK THE CLERIK: the problem is finding him!

SECOND OPINION

Still great value, even if the 'Added Dimension' is an extra quid. This game is certainly smoother and more sophisticated than many you would pay full price for. The windowing works very well, but can take a little time to get used to.

The game is by no means easy. Lots of brain power is necessary to keep track of the numerous characters and their status, and to figure out what on earth to so with the many objects you encounter.

PC

fills the screen. One of the most important is the ability to command other characters to do things, either to help you or just to stay alive. They can be told to eat and drink, help, fall asleep, wake up, go away or be happy. Some are more useful than others but you'll have to be careful because sometimes they may not be cooperative, particularly about objects.

Another important command that you will come across is control of the lift that gets you between the seven floors of the castle. Other helpful additions are the ability to locate a character (they wander around when they're awake), blowing things and casting spells. There is a list of several spells, each one explained by its name.

This is yet another excellent package from Mastertronic with some excellent graphics, great in-game sound and some fascinating puzzles. The window menu system may not be THAT original but it makes the adventure side very playable and really opens up the game's potential and detail.

BW

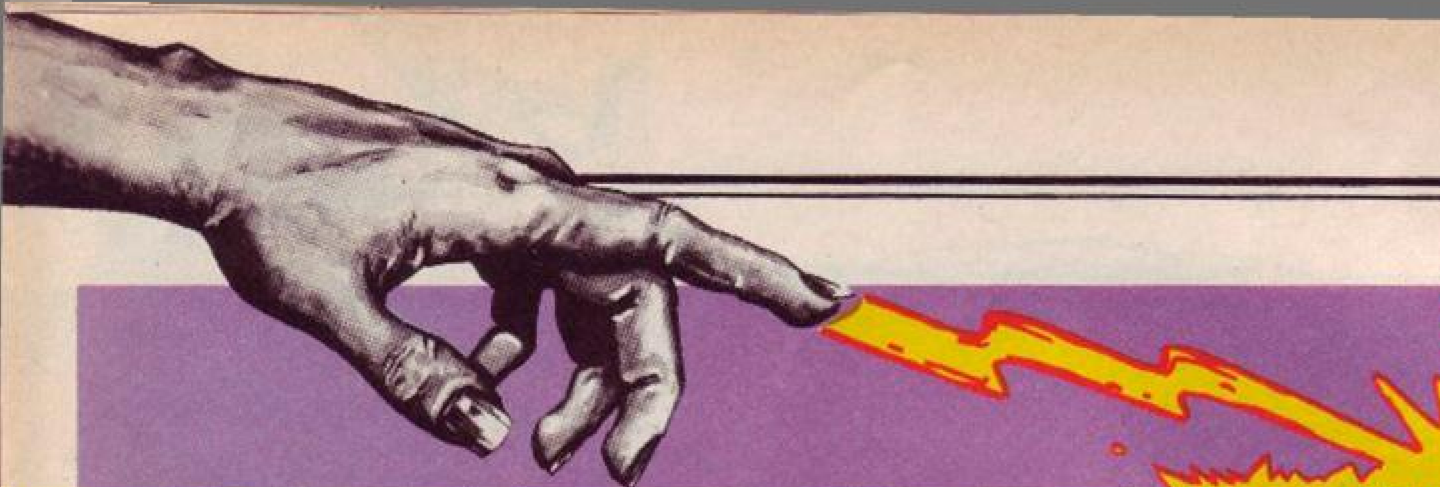
G O O D N E W S

- **Excellent graphics and animation.**
- **Wonderful music plays throughout the game.**
- **Window menus add a fascinating new dimension.**
- **Some really tough puzzles to solve.**
- **Multi-character control also adds to the game.**
- **Still a great price.**

B A D N E W S

- **May take time to get into the puzzle solving.**

GRAPHICS	78%
SONICS	80%
GRAB FACTOR	86%
STAYING POWER	90%
A A RATING	90%



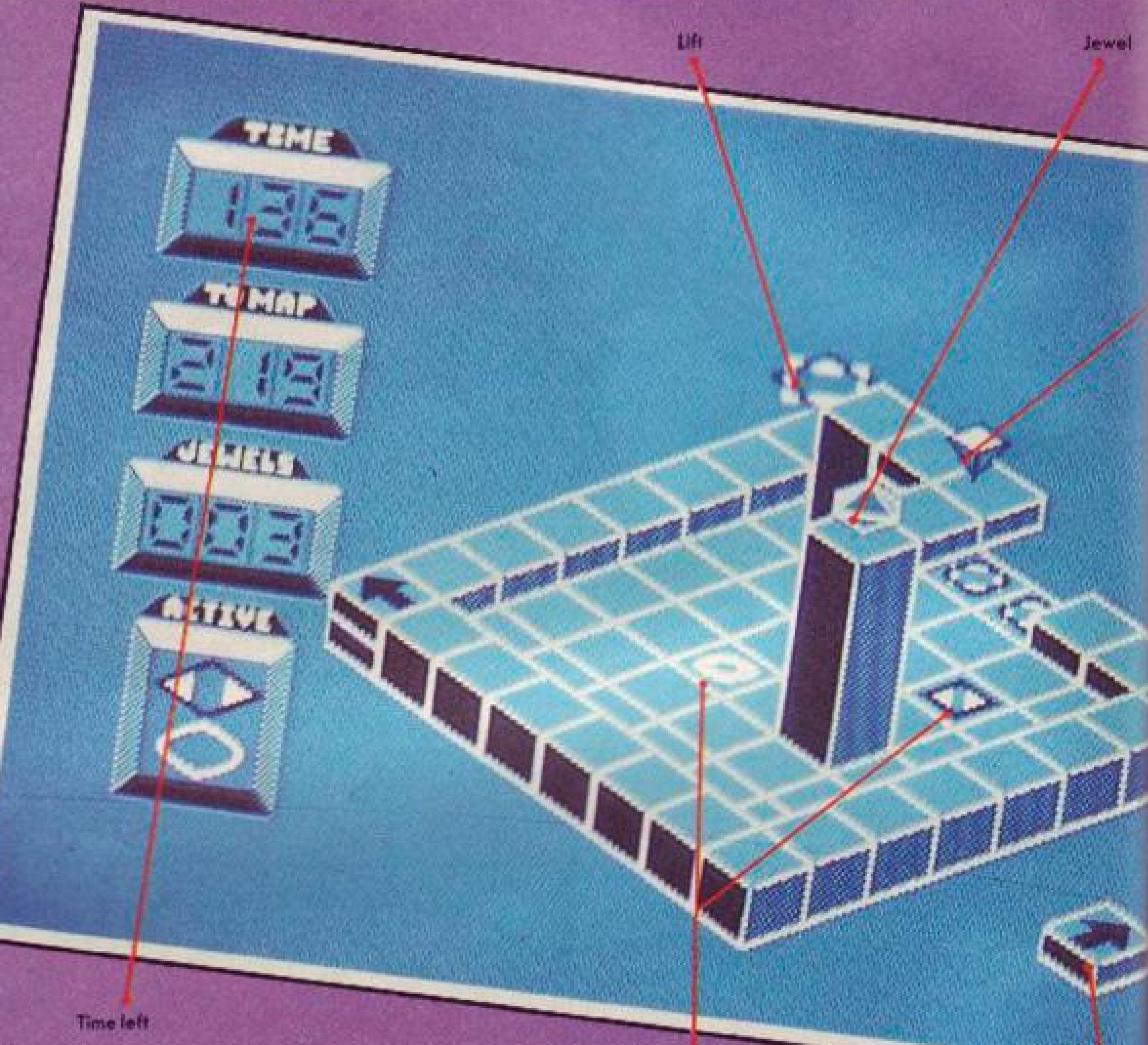
MASTERGAME

SPINDIZZY

Electric Dreams, £9.95 cass, £14.95 disc
joystick only

The success of a game called *Marble Madness* in the arcades and the emergence of the Amstrad as a leader in the computer games field combine here to produce an original game that will have other machine owners salivating like Pavlovian dogs to get at your Arnold. It combines marvellous graphics, testing puzzles and a large playing area to make a stunningly original and challenging game.

Gyroscope was the first attempt at a game like this but is easily surpassed by the complexity of this latest game. You control a spinning top in its journey around the 400 odd screens that make up a weird world of puzzling action where a swift and steady hand on the joystick is required. The aim is to collect jewels that are tucked away on most of the screens, often in seemingly impossible spots to reach.



Puzzle plus

The puzzling element to the game involves many tests in logic and experimentation using the various types of symbol and surface that appear on the floor. Some have a simple physical effect like the ice and the trampolines while others like the switch and clue squares have a more complicated purpose.

They can be "picked up" in an "active" box on the screen and used to activate something else there or possibly be held onto for use elsewhere. Most often they will operate lifts but they will also be needed to ...well that would be telling – find out for yourself.

There is even a room where you can learn how these squares behave. Thisthis has an odd musical quality about it that makes it unmistakeable. It's placed in an area of the game where you can learn about control as well as the special features – a sort of school for spin. This added dimension gives the game the mental as well as the arcade challenge that takes it right out of the ordinary and into the astounding.

Control of your top is very sensitive as it responds to every twitch on the joystick but once you've got the hang of that it makes it a highly manoeuverable and speedy tool. The lanscape doesn't help out most of the time either with steep slopes, narrow ledges, high walls, gaps in the floor, tight corridors, long drops and treacherous surfaces all awaiting you. The early games will be spent exploring this environment and wondering at its constant string of surprises.

Once you've got to grips with all that the finer points of movement can be dealt with. The most important detail is the power provided by the fire button that can give the top rapid acceleration in a short space to propel it past some danger. There will also be times when it will need to be nudged very slowly about in tight spots where speed will be fatal.

The whole exercise is performed against the clock which gradually ticks down but is pushed back up every time a jewel is collected. If while trying to leap over a gap in the floor or sneak along a ledge the top should plunge to its doom then time is knocked off the clock and the top restarts from where it fell off. Falling too far to the ground will also lose time and the top will explode in four pieces.

All of this is impressive enough but it's when you start discovering the game's special features that your jaw really drops open. These include special puzzle features, a map function, view switching and a green screen option. The map and the view switching make it much easier to get around and locate the jewels with the map showing where an uncollected jewel is located once you've been in the room and the view switching allowing you to see the screen from four angles in order to locate any hidden jewels. This is

SECOND OPINION

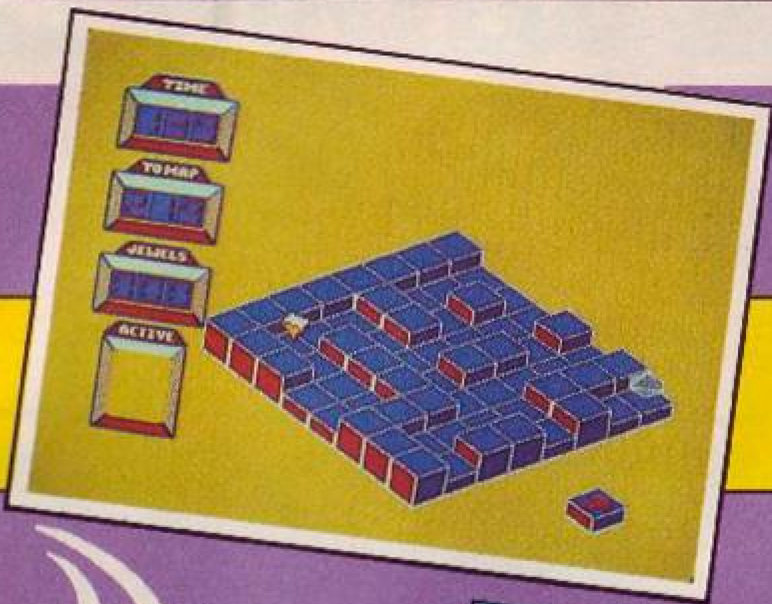
Fiendishly compulsive and graphically superb, this is a knockout Mastergame. It's about time someone came up with another corking Amstrad original – Electric Dreams will get their reward right now as well in heaven.

The sheer size is impressive enough, but it's executed with enough brilliance to make it an instant classic. Once you've got the feel of the controls you're unlikely to stop until you've cracked it. And that could be quite some time.

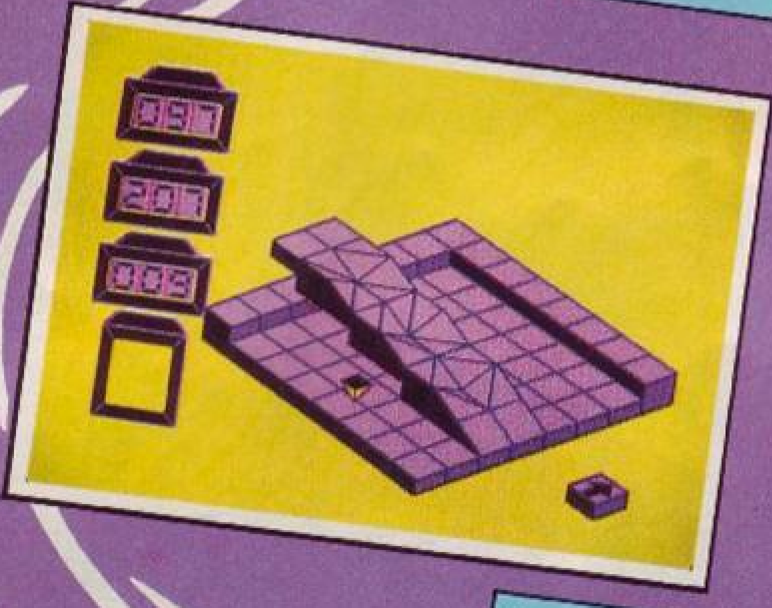
PC



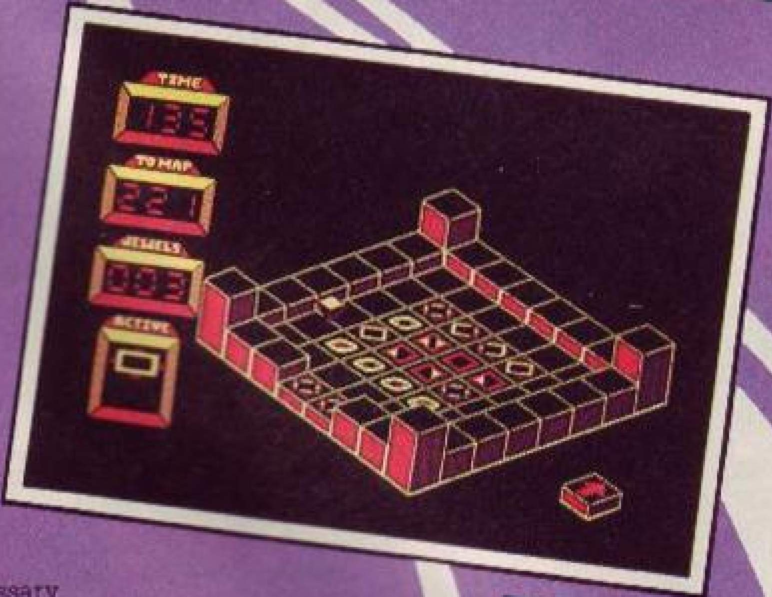
Spinning top



The top enters a maze of blocks



A rough ride up a bumpy slope awaits



The "music" room is packed with floor symbols

very necessary since the screens are all in delightful 3D and high walls and slopes can often obsqure the view. To prevent you becoming disorientated a compass always points the way north.

Graphically the game is superb with brilliantly designed screens in many different colours all composed of the geometric building blocks. Sound is limited to the odd effect but these are well done and alert you to things happening. The gameplay is tough to get to grips with but soon becomes a joy and a constant challenge. It will be some while before anyone cracks this game but I guarantee you won't be able to stop playing for weeks after buying it.

BW

GOOD NEWS

- About 400 screens to explore.
- Stunning graphics and screen designs.
- Testing puzzles and traps.
- Good view switching facility.
- Some extremely difficult screens but very easy to get into.
- Knocks spots off *Gyroscope* (and we thought that was good).

BAD NEWS

- Amstrad only. Ha, ha, ha!

GRAPHICS	93%
SONICS	27%
GRAB FACTOR	96%
STAYING POWER	97%
A A RATING	96%

Amstrad rules OK

This is an original title that will doubtless undergo conversion to other micros – but they won't be as impressive or have as much impact as this is going to. We are undoubtedly seeing the emergence of the Amstrad as a leader in games development rather than just a machine to be converted to. It may take all of 1986 to complete the transition but there's no doubt it is happening.

Yie Ar Kung-Fu was another enormously impressive game that came out on Arnold first and Amsoft are continuing to improve their games and produce original ones like *Tank Command, Doors of Doom* and *Golden Path*. Z80 programmers are beginning to see the increased potential of the Amstrad and are switching development of games from Spectrum to Amstrad as the market grows.

The utilities and hardware market is already more active and fast moving than for other machines and games are going the same way. 1986 is definitely the year of the Amstrad.


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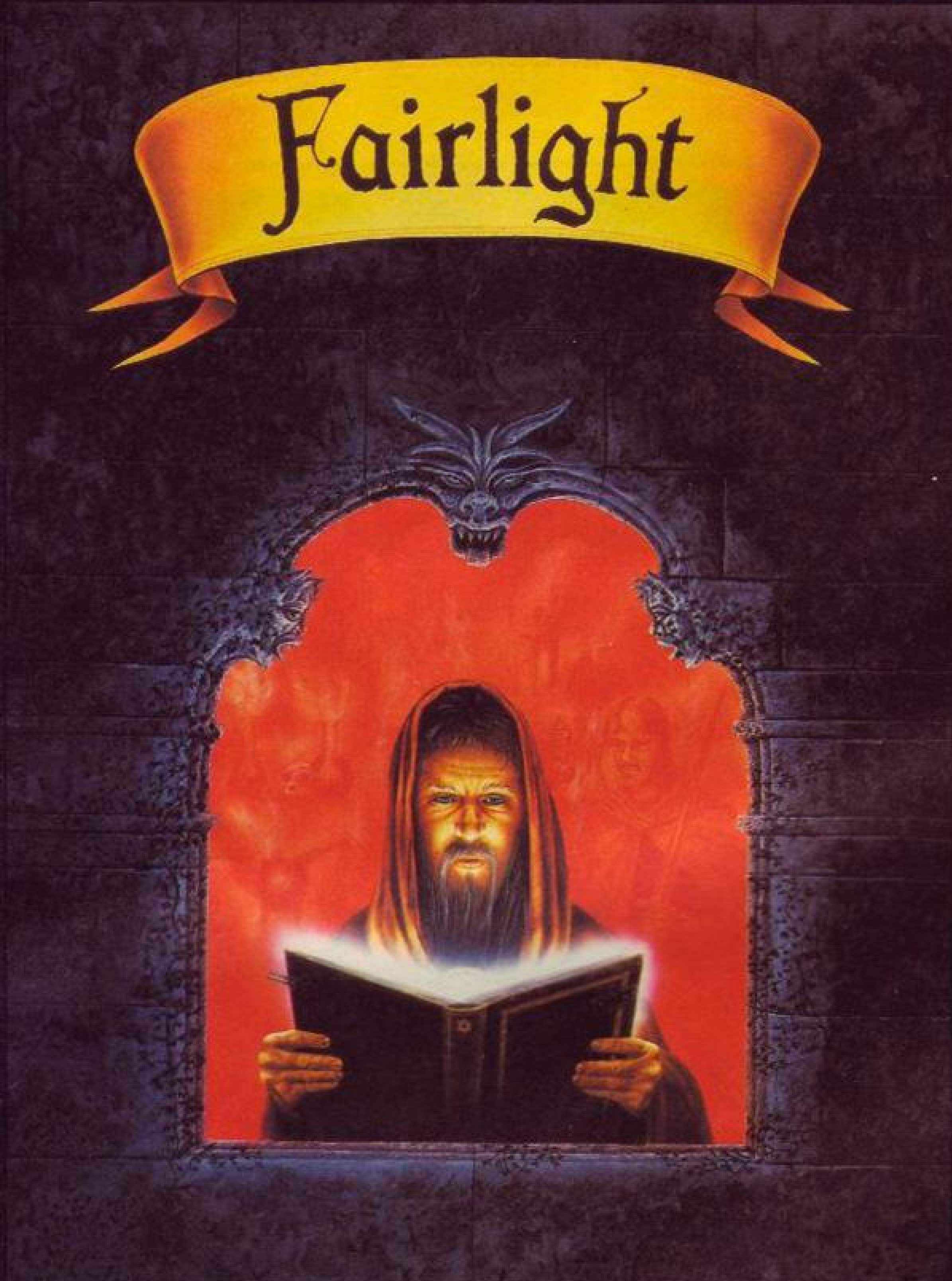
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BY BO JANGEBORG

(author of 'The Artist')

"Maybe *the* game of the year!"
Your Spectrum, November 1985

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". . . one of the ten best programs ever made for the Spectrum."
Popular Computing Weekly, October 1985.

". . . the best arcade adventure of the year."
Your Spectrum, November 1985

THE EDGE

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RALLY DRIVER

Hill MacGibbon, £7.95 cass, joystick or keys

This is a long way from the *Pole Position* lookalikes that spring up on most computers. It relies less on reflexes than on good planning and real driving skill. The planning is important as you work out a route through the forests, fields and towns of the rally while the driving skill is needed to steer along the twisting roads covered with mud, water and other hazards.

The rally is split into three stages each of which has to be completed in a qualifying time in order to pass onto the next. The view from the car is out of the front window with the road ahead, passing landmarks and horizon visible. On the dashboard of the car are the steering wheel, time elapsed, penalty time, speed, turn indicators, handbrake and distance travelled. These don't need to be referred to too often, most concentration being aimed at the speed and direction of the car.

Control of the car is straightforward enough but the course demands plenty of work on the driver's part to get him around safely and quickly. He's trying to qualify for the next stage by getting one of the top seven times, ten opponents being computer controlled at the start. Speed is needed in order to make that time but too much speed will induce mistakes and these cost time in penalties that are added on.

SECOND OPINION

An intelligently created game that cleverly simulates some of the skills needed in driving a rally – though I'm not sure how many moo-cows you get on the roads in the Monte Carlo. It's certainly more interesting and mentally demanding than your average rev-em-up.

PC

Running off the road costs a 30 second penalty but if you're travelling too fast a five minute penalty may result from a bad crash. Penalties can also be picked up for hitting cows or spectators in the road, which have to be warned with your horn to move them. Time control gates appear on every stage and will also cause delays since you have to stop at them to check in. For each gate you need to type in a two letter code to avoid another penalty. The code is on a sign somewhere before the gate which you have to pass slow enough for the co-driver to read.

As if these hazards weren't enough the weather may also do its worst to you. Mud and water may appear on the road to make you skid or whole sections may be flooded and impassable forcing you to take a longer route. On the other hand there are short cuts that may cut some time off the journey if they're open for use.

The qualifying times are quite tough to achieve and making the grade certainly will take a lot of practice. The control at first feels very odd but as you adjust to the driving skills needed taking corners and junctions can be done quite efficiently. The map that is provided with the game provides plenty of preplanning for the race and although you can learn the course there are plenty of factors that mean you can't rely on always putting up a good performance.

The graphics are reasonable with the display changing to suit the weather conditions although the screen update can be rather jerky. At faster speeds things can move much faster and smoother but this is riskier since a crash can cause heavy penalties. This is certainly more demanding than the average driving game and presents a very tough long term challenge.

BW

GOOD NEWS

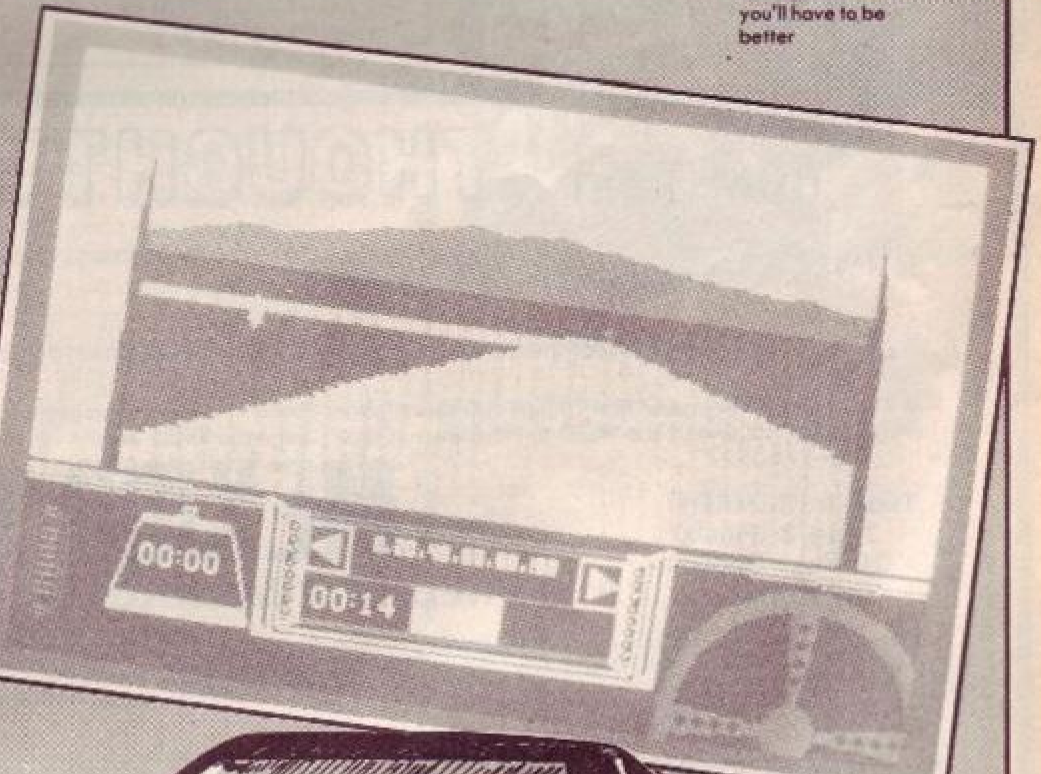
- **Very difficult to qualify, let alone win.**
- **Good courses with nice random factor thrown in.**
- **Nice features like cows on road and road map.**
- **Good graphics, if a little slow at times.**

BAD NEWS

- **Control can be very tough at first.**
- **One mistake, like the real thing, can ruin a whole stage – infuriating.**

GRAPHICS	68%
SONICS	46%
GRAB FACTOR	66%
STAYING POWER	77%
A A RATING	71%

You don't need a driving test for this – you'll have to be better







BATTLE STARS

FOR THE
AMSTRAD
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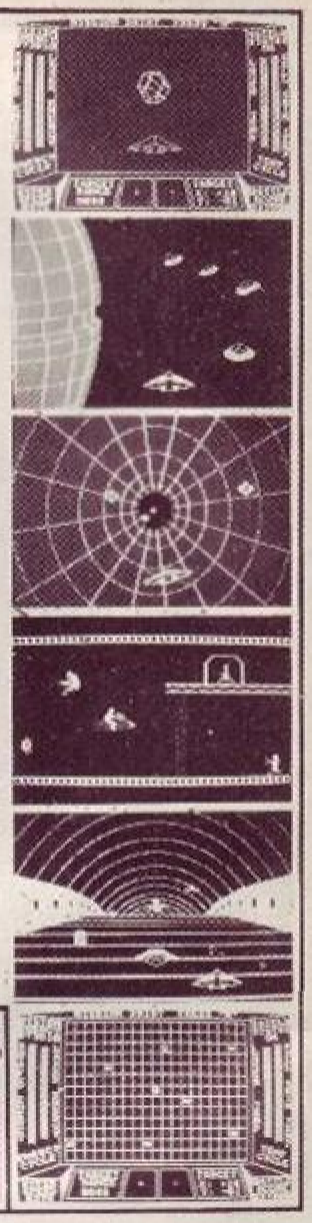
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Amstrad Action review, Jan '86.

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★ Formation and strength information on opposition.
★ 2 from 9 substitutes (the FA tells us so).

ENGLAND'S GAMES: FULL PITCH, 22 MAN, 3D GRAPHICS & SOUND EFFECTS

QUAL-SOFT comments: With 5 levels of play, 12 depths of sophistication, and "fun" graphics, this game can be enjoyed by an 8 year old youngster as a "fun" game, and by the most sophisticated as a tactical/strategy challenge of the highest order.

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WRECKLESS ROGER
Blaby, £1.99 cass, joystick or keys

Roger has been careless enough to let a pack of theiving aliens steal his spaceship and spread it about the local planet. Now he's 'wreckless' enough to try to go and get it back. However, probably the most reckless thing of all would be to buy this game.

SECOND OPINION

The awful pun of the title is right and fitting for the awful game that follows. It's a museum piece that should have been kept in its case.

PC

It's basically a single screen game where Roger appears with his jet pack and a laser flying around a rectangular box. Into the box appear alien objects, two at a time, intent on killing Roger. He has to blast them away until they stop reappearing although there are only ever two of them on screen at once. After a while they stop coming and Roger can move horizontally or vertically to a new screen where the only difference will be the border design.

The aliens follow simple movement patterns around the screen and come in quite a nice variety of shapes. If Roger runs into the aliens they gradually sap his energy until he loses one of his three lives, all of which is done very jerkily indeed.



Roger deals death to alien after alien after alien after...

That's all there is to the game – just flying about the screen dodging the aliens and blasting mindlessly away at them. The only evidence that this isn't a one screen shoot-em-up is the changing borders and the occasional occurance of a piece of ship. This may numb your mind for five minutes before making it shrivel up completely.

BW

GOOD NEWS

- ► **It doesn't disable the RESET keys.**

BAD NEWS

- ► **Monotonous gameplay.**
- ► **Rotten sound.**
- ► **Every screen is the same.**

GRAPHICS	37%
SONICS	17%
GRAB FACTOR	20%
STAYING POWER	15%
A A RATING	17%

ASTRO PLUMBER
Blue Ribbon, £2.50 cass, keys only

It's tough enough trying to get a good plumber here on earth but when you've got a load of leaks in the air pipes on the moon you can expect at least a three year delay and an awful lot of overtime payments. However, since you are the plumber the job is merely being done out of the goodness of your heart and an overwhelming desire to play video games.

The leaking pipes on the moon are contained within four screens of caverns, each one patrolled by alien monsters and connected up by ladders, corridors and teleport pads. The plumber starts on the surface of the moon where air tanks replenish his supply of oxygen. This runs out at a fairly rapid rate so that frequent trips are needed since running out of air ends the game. There are tanks on the surface on all four horizontally arranged screens but overfilling the plumber's tanks will also result in the loss of a life.

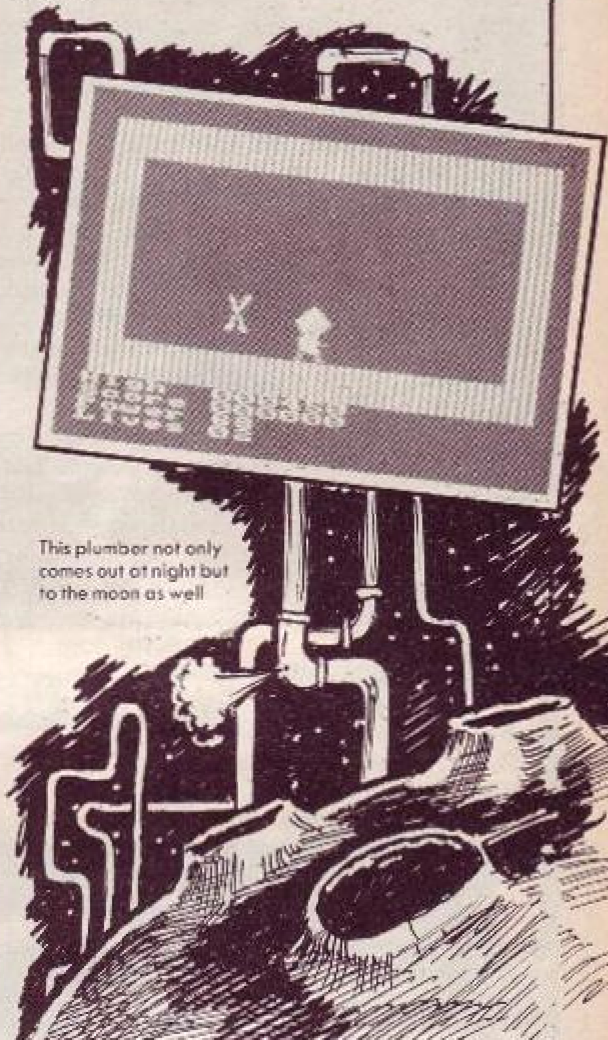
SECOND OPINION

Best of the Blue Ribbon bunch by a long chalk. The gameplay offers a few challenges, the graphics are reasonable and the whole thing is pretty jolly.

PC

The leaks are always in the pipes above the corridors so that they are sealed by firing a laser upwards at them. Unfortunately this can't be used on the alien inhabitants, who just have to be avoided. They move up and down the corridors, killing you on contact, but some can be flown over using your jet pack. The laser and the jet pack are both supplied by fuel and this is another thing that will end the game if it runs out. Thus, losing all your oxygen, fuel or lives all end the game.

Once all the leaks on one screen are sealed the air pressure of the colony goes up and a bonus life is awarded. However, if you leave a screen before sealing all the leaks they will all reappear when the plumber returns to the screen. If pressure reaches maximum the game starts all over again only faster.



This plumber not only comes out at night but to the moon as well

The game itself is pretty tough with the speed at which the air runs out being the meanest obstacle to cope with. This particular plumber may take a long while to get the job done so don't hold your breath waiting for someone to repair the loos on the space shuttle.

BW

GOOD NEWS

- ► **Four very tough screens to complete.**
- ► **Plenty to keep an eye on and cope with.**
- ► **Oxygen runs out too fast for my liking.**

BAD NEWS

- ► **Keys only play.**
- ► **Despite difficulty four screens isn't a lot.**
- ► **Really yucky sound effects.**

GRAPHICS	47%
SONICS	24%
GRAB FACTOR	57%
STAYING POWER	43%
A A RATING	48%

THE REAL YOU?

Collins Soft/ASK, £14.95 cass

Are you the sort of person that just can't resist filling in silly questionnaires in the Sunday colour supplements? Have you got a burning desire to know more about the inner you? Are you worried about any problems you've been having lately? Do people who keep asking rhetorical questions in print really get on your nerves? If so then take a look at this program, because it may bring to life any of those interests and a few others too.

The program consists of a series of tests which analyse different areas of your life and interests and attempt to draw conclusions about the sort of person you are. It isn't a home course in psychology but it may give insights into yourself or even the occasional laugh with some of the more lighthearted tests. There are six main sections which are subdivided into 16 sub-groups, each one dealing with a different aspect of your life.

The tests load in two parts, three tests in each, any of which can then be selected or reselected. Each test is made up of a series of questions which have to be answered in a multiple choice fashion with the computer doing all the scoring. The answers are picked using the joystick or keys to indicate a box on the screen or very occasionaly to type in a word or number. The answers take different formats though – sometimes they will be simple yes or no choices, ratings out of 10, indications of how strongly you feel or a choice between several different things.

The tests can be performed in any order and can be retaken if you decide to change some of your answers. Remember, though, that you aren't trying to get a high score at everything, just find out WHO you are. At the end of the test you're given a score and by comparing this with the ratings and information in the instruction booklet you can find out what sort of person the computer thinks you are.

All the tests are well put together and very informative and if taken honestly can be very interesting; not just in their conclusions but by making you think about issues and problems you might otherwise unconsciously avoid. The first three sections are work, intellect and personality.

Work is sub-grouped into satisfaction and potential with the conclusions showing whether you are basically satisfied with your job (presuming you've got one) and what prospects there are for you in the future. These are very much aimed at the office worker and executive though; it isn't a general career guide of what will be a good job for you, more an assessment of management potential.

Intellect is split into three sections: IQ, thinker and brain. The first of these tries to discover your IQ with a series of tests and puzzles. Thinker tries to find out whether you are a pragmatist, realist, idealist and all the other -ists, in other words your thinking style. Brain tries to discover whether you are left or right brain dominated and hence whether you are artistic or scientific.

Personality examines your self-consciousness and acceptance. The former tries to discover your private and public self-consciousness, your social anxiety and general self-consciousness. Acceptance looks at your need for social acceptance or whether you're happier as a loner. Lovelife gives your relationships and sex the once over to see whether a relationship is likely to survive or how satisfied you are sexually.

Anxiety has three sections: stress, your body and fear. This gets to the bottom of all that worrying we do, whether your satisfied with your body and what you're afraid of, taking tests for example. The last section is *Views*, which has four sub groups: morals, politics, hi-tech and snob. These attempt to tell you how strong your moral values are, what your politics are, whether you're in touch with technology and whether you're a snob. The last of these is a very entertaining section with plenty of funny questions and answers.

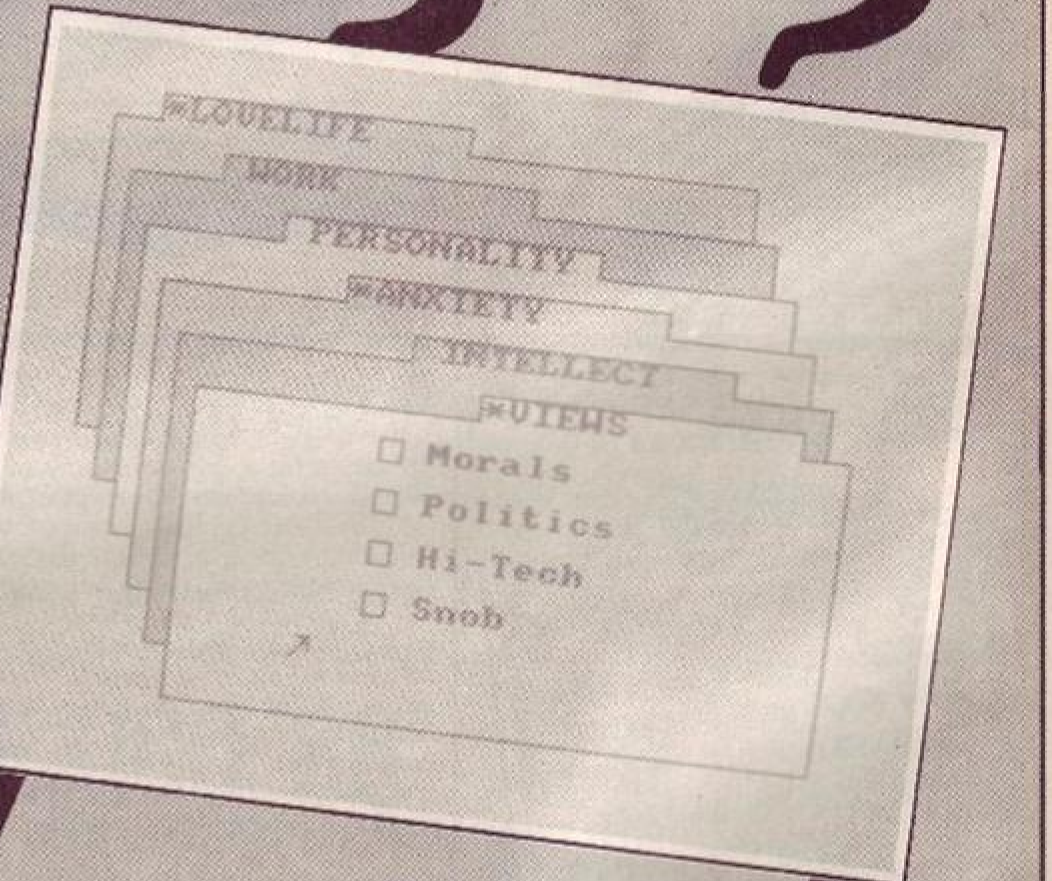
As with most tests of this nature it shouldn't be taken too seriously but it is very entertaining and does give valuable insights. You may find it doesn't tell you anything about yourself you didn't already know but it should make you think about many things and have a good time doing it.

BW

SECOND OPINION

Well, I'm not someone who ever does Sunday supplement quizzes. Not, I hasten to add, because I'm a snob – I just can't be bothered. But taking the trouble with this program proved worth the effort. It's always amusing, if not to be taken too seriously.

PC



GOOD NEWS

- **Six tests split into 16 sections.**
- **Both serious insight and entertainment can be achieved.**
- **Each test is very thorough.**
- **The questions cover many subjects and will make you think hard.**

BAD NEWS

- **Loads in two sections.**
- **May not tell you anything you don't already know.**

MINI OFFICE 2

We look at the suite of programs which, for under £20, can turn your Arnold into a powerful business machine.

The original *Mini Office* has long been recognised as an astonishing bargain for anyone looking for a low-cost introduction to serious software. Now the four programs which made it up have been substantially enhanced and two new programs have been added. The result, *Mini Office 2*, is more than just an introduction to serious software applications. It's good enough to fulfill the entire software needs of many a small business!

Unlike the skimpy leaflet which accompanied its predecessor, *Mini Office 2* is packaged with a nicely-produced 60-page manual. However, although it gives a reasonably thorough rundown of each program's features, there's virtually nothing in the way of examples to guide a complete newcomer. A pity, because the package ought to attract many such people. Unlike the earlier version, the package is now readily available on disk, although there is no version to make use of the extra memory on the 6128. It's disk owners who will most readily be able to exploit a major selling point – the six programs are closely interrelated. Records set up using the database can be used in conjunction with the word-processor or printed out on labels by the label-printer. And figures generated by the spreadsheet can be used by the graphics program. All the programs are presented to the user in a similar way using various menus of options. These are selected by cursor key or, if you have one, the AMX mouse. The range of features in each program is astonishing for a package of this cost. There's space for only a brief look at each.

WORD-PROCESSOR

Our version contained a number of very annoying bugs mainly to do with the way text is formatted after inserts. We told Database about them and apparently some last minute changes have been made to put them right. We hope so, because without them the word-processor is very impressive.

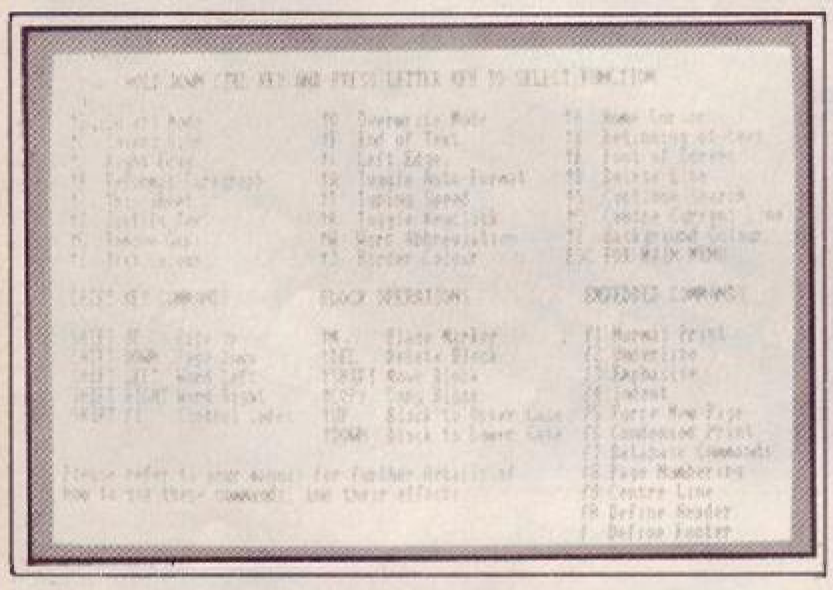
Text can be entered using a 20-column, 40-column or 80-column display. You can use INSERT or OVERWRITE mode, and AUTO-JUSTIFICATION of the right margin can be switched on or off.

Moving through a document and editing it is generally fairly simple and there are powerful commands for manipulating BLOCKS of text. They can be MOVED, COPIED, DELETED or changed to upper or lower case characters.

Constantly on screen is information showing how many words you've written, how long you've been typing and how many characters there's still room for – documents can be up to 20K long.

There's a good SEARCH and REPLACE function and plenty of scope for controlling the look of the PRINTED OUTPUT. Printer control characters can be embedded in the document to make parts of the text italicised, bold, underlined or condensed. You can set up headers and footers to be printed on every page of a document and page-numbers can be positioned to your liking.

The number of lines per page and characters per line can also be altered, and documents can be printed using double height or double width characters – the processor is compatible with either of the Amstrad dot-matrix printers and with any Epson-compatible printer.



► The help screen from the word-processor

DATABASE

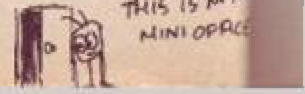
For many users this program will be every bit as useful as any of the range of full-price databases reviewed elsewhere in this issue. Records can contain up to 20 'fields' (ie. pieces of information) and those containing numbers or dates can be used to generate further fields by means of simple formulae. So for example if you wanted to enter the length of beetles you were collecting in both inches and millimetres, you could just enter one figure and the program would automatically calculate the other.

There is plenty of FLEXIBILITY when you first set up the database – the fewer fields you decide to use, the more records can be held in any one file. For just a simple name and address book you'd probably be limited to only about 200 records. However, disk users can have much bigger databases because the program can break them up into a number of different files stored separately on disk but treated as one. The size limit, unless you have two disk drives, is about half the space on a disk which would work out at more like 1000 names and addresses.

The database can be SEARCHED for any combination of fields. You could look for all Bloggs who live in Bognor for example. If you're unsure of the precise spelling or piece of information it doesn't matter. Searching for Vlad* will track down that Russian emigre whether his name's Vladimir or Vladroshki.

The SORT option can select any field and sort alphabetically, numerically or by date. The order can be ascending or descending.

The PRINT facility allows you a hard copy of the entire database or simply the records marked by a search routine.





SPREADSHEET

Another powerful, easy-to-use program. Apart from a limit on the size of spreadsheet to only about 300 cells and certain restrictions on the forumulae you can enter, it's every bit as good as a program such as MasterCalc which costs more than the entire Mini Office 2.

CREATING a spreadsheet is reasonably fast, with options to duplicate individual cells, to call up a formula with a number, and auto movement on the cursor which can be set in any direction. However there is no facility to copy an entire row, column or block.

It's also possible to INSERT or DELETE extra rows and columns, to have AUTOMATIC RECALCULATION on or off, to LOCK and unlock particular cells, and to alter the FORMAT of individual rows or columns on such matters as number of decimal places and whether text is set right or left.

FORMULAE are limited to simple arithmetic expressions together with the ability to total a row or column, and find the largest or smallest figure in a row or column. Brackets and decimal points unfortunately cannot be used.

You can also PRINT either the entire spreadsheet or some part of it.

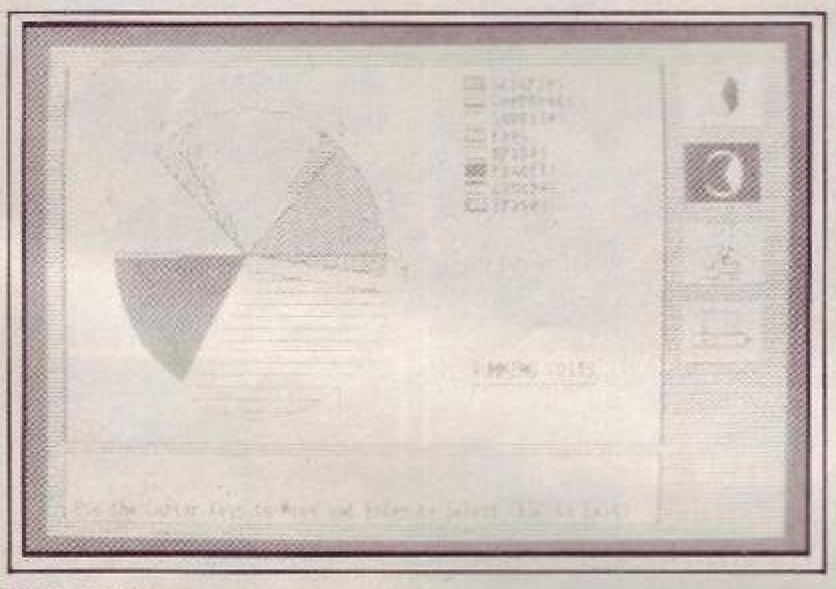
GRAPHICS

This delightful little program allows you to produce professional looking charts to illustrate a set of figures. You can either enter figures specifically for it, or load in a row or column saved from a spreadsheet you've created.

Up to three different sets of data, each containing up to 20 values can be used at any one time. According to your selection, the program will then convert these into one of three different types of BAR CHART, two different LINE GRAPHS, or two different PIE CHARTS. All three data sets can be displayed at once if you wish allowing you to compare data very easily.

You can even give a name to each figure (eg. months of the year), and these will be shown on the chart. A title can be added and then the whole printed out.

SCALING can be done automatically and is shown on the chart. The whole can then be PRINTED if your printer is Epson-compatible. Could save hours of work, this one.



► A demo of the output from the graphics prog

COMMUNICATIONS

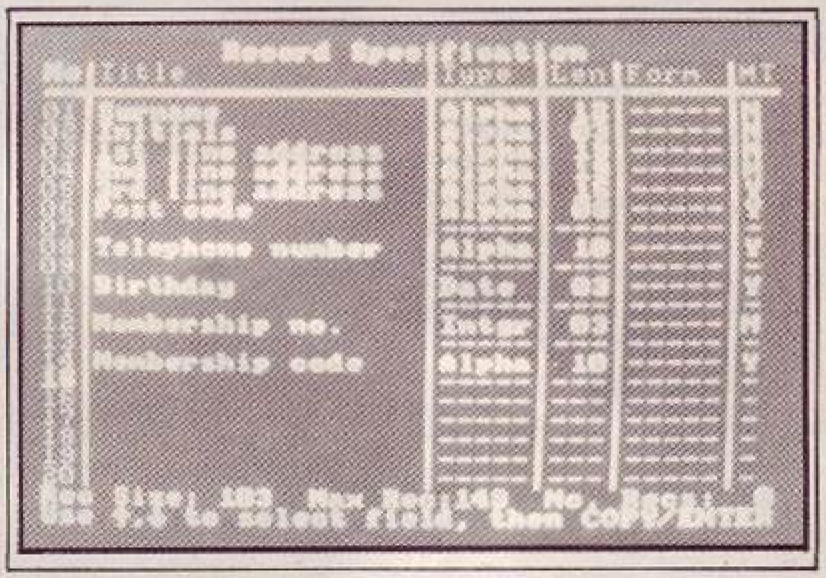
This will be of interest to people with modems or those who want to pass files to other computer owners. It assumes you own the Amstrad RS232 interface and basically takes all the hassle out of operating the thing.

You use it to set up all the protocol options used by serial interfaces and then to receive or transmit files. Some more commonly used formats such as Telecom Gold are available preset. The program can also set up a buffer which allows files to be transmitted or received while you are doing other things with the machine.

Among the other options are the facility to filter control codes, alter the automatic line-feed and set up a 'local echo'.

LABEL PRINTING

This is a useful add-on module for the database. It allows you to



► Setting up the structure of the database

print out records from the database in label form. It's very flexible since you can define the print layout very precisely and also get the program to adjust itself to the type of label stationery you're using.

A typical use would be a club secretary who had his members' names and addresses on the database and wanted to do a regular mailout. Since the word-processor can also use database records to create a simple mail-merge facility he could even have a letter printed out which was automatically addressed to each member.

G O O D N E W S

► You get six powerful programs any one of which might have sold for the cost of the entire package.
► The programs have similar structures – easier to get to know than six unrelated progs.
► Reasonable manual and many enhancements make it far better than *Mini Office I*, despite extra cost.
► Superb way of introducing yourself to a wide range of serious software.
► Disk version, without question, a powerful business tool.

B A D N E W S

► Maximum size of files produced by word-processor, database and spreadsheet fairly small.
► Our pre-production copy contained bugs – but these may now have been removed.

Database Software, £14.95 cass, £19.95 disk

VOICE OF THE PEOPLE

Come on you lot! Just because we're nearly always right it doesn't mean you can't disagree with us. If you've got a difference of opinion about a recent review or you just want to get *your* views printed, get scribbling and send the result to us. This is *your* page, to throw bouquets or brickbats as *you* think fit. Let the software producers know what *you* think; let the people be heard!

Put your comments, something along the lines of the Second Opinion boxes in our reviews, on a postcard or the back of an envelope and send them to: *Voice of the People, Amstrad Action, The Old Barn, Somerton, Somerset TA11 7PS.*

BARRY McGUIGAN's BOXING
Activision
AA Rating 86%

Graphics and sound are excellent with some great effects, like the camera flashes from the crowd. Left, jab...right cross...knockout!
Gerry Hughes, Cranleigh

GYROSCOPE
Melbourne House
AA Rating 78%

A very good game indeed – after you've figured out how to control your character. Graphics are good with some very original backgrounds, and the sound, generally speaking, is excellent. However, the scrolling is awful and it's too easy for your gyroscope to collide with an alien nasty.
Nick Chaplin, Maidenhead

Melbourne House's best game yet – a very polished piece of programming indeed. The graphics are stunning, the sound well above average and the gameplay very addictive.
David Baxter, Carlukie



SPELLBOUND
Mastertronic
AA Rating 90%

This game has real depth. The graphics are good and animation is good too – there is also an excellent tune by Rob Hubbard. The puzzles are very hard yet logical. However, probably the best feature is windimation, the many menus you can call up at any time.
Simon O'Connell, Sidcup

NIGHTSHADE
Ultimate
AA Rating 85%

A refreshing change from the old *Knight Lore/Alien 8* formula, while keeping the same kind of amazing 3D graphics. The scrolling, given the amount of material being moved around at once, is very fast and relatively flicker-free. However, the real plus-point about *Nightshade* is the fact that you can blast the nasties. No girly jumping here – just lots of mindless killing!
Nick Chaplin, Maidenhead

WHO DARES WINS 2
Activision
AA Rating 83%

One of the most enjoyable games I have played on my Amstrad. The graphics and animation are excellent, the sound is reasonable. However, the best things are the playability and the addictiveness. I just could not stop playing until I had completed it...Very HARD! In short..BRILL!
Simon O'Connell, Sidcup

WINTER SPORTS
Electric Dreams
AA Rating 48%

I couldn't pull myself away from this one. Lord lummy is it good! Eight graphically amazing, brilliantly sounding, mega-addictive events.

This is a brilliant game and is in no way a massive rip-off.
P.S. I lied. It's pathetic.
RDJ Connelly, Crofton

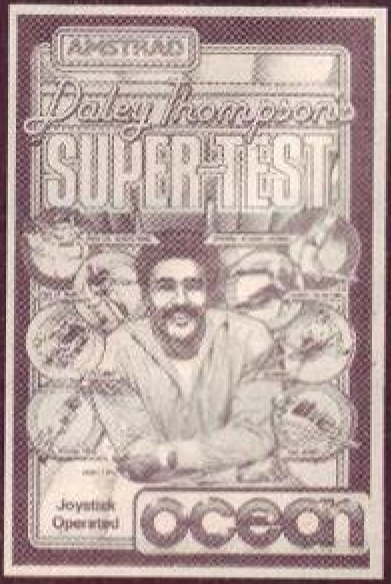
Could have been really great. But due to shoddy programming and a rush job it falls well short.
David Baxter, Carlukie

DT'S SUPERTEST
Ocean
AA Rating 85%

Graphically and musically excellent, with good use of colour. It also has some nice little touches, such as the disappearing hands when you lose a life and the fireworks in the award ceremony. Two annoying things: no option for keys, and only four events per side.
RDJ Connelly, Crofton

An improvement on *Decathlon*. A better range of events, with good graphics. The diving and ski-ing are especially good, with slightly increasing difficulty levels. Humour is added with the diver's splash, the ski-jumper's snowball Daley's disappearing face.
H Astley, Horwich

A very colourful and enjoyable sports game. Although the events are less varied than in *Hypersports*, the graphics are better, and the action is altogether a lot smoother and more professional. Definitely the best sports game on the Amstrad.
Nick Chaplin, Maidenhead

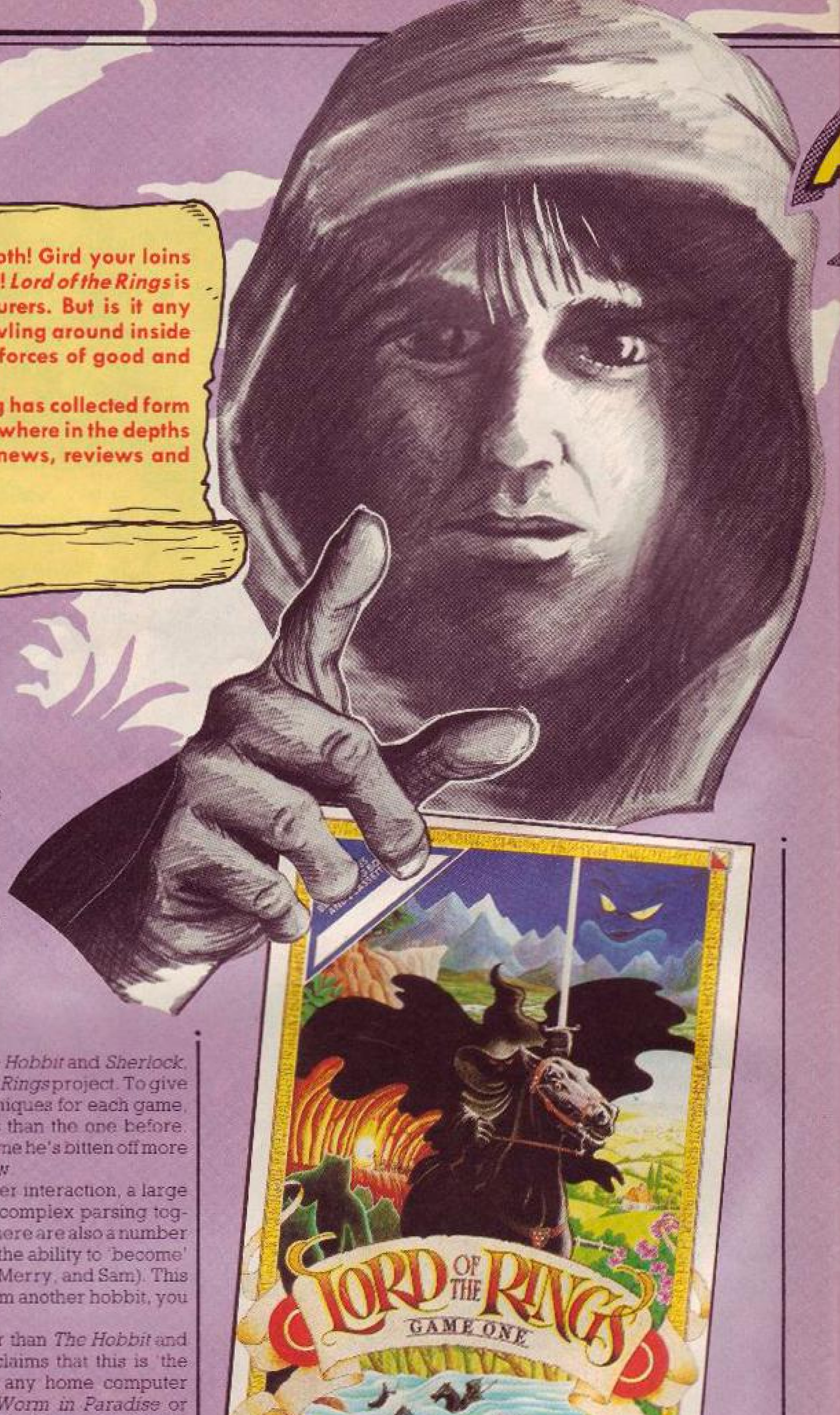




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SKYFOX – Amstrad Cassette £9.95
UK orders only. Prices include P&P. Please allow 28 days for delivery.
ariolasoft
HIGH PERFORMANCE PROGRAMS

Pilgrims! Arise from your wintery sloth! Gird your loins and brush your teeth, for it has arrived! *Lord of the Rings* is now available for Arnold's adventurers. But is it any good? Are there any nasty bugs crawling around inside the mammoth struggle between the forces of good and evil? Read on and find out.

And read the many missives Pilg has collected form his mail-box in the gnarled oak somewhere in the depths of Epping Forest. Plus all the usual news, reviews and help for Pilgrims in distress.



LORD OF THE RINGS

Melbourne House, £15.99, cass

It's here at last! The Pilg has been busy combing the hair between his toes these last few days and getting to grips with what must be one of the most long-awaited adventures ever, Melbourne House's *Lord of the Rings*.

So, was it worth the wait? Is this really the mega-blaster we've all been waiting for? It certainly looks impressive, coming in a whopping great case complete with a copy of *Fellowship of the Ring* and two game cassettes. The manual isn't all that flashy, being a rather skimpy 29 page folded leaflet affair, but it does give you all the info you need on playing the game.

Philip Mitchell, who programmed *The Hobbit* and *Sherlock*, was the driving force behind the *Lord of the Rings* project. To give him his due, he always develops new techniques for each game, with each program being more ambitious than the one before. However, it's tempting to suggest that this time he's bitten off more than your average home computer can chew.

He's tried to squeeze complex character interaction, a large vocabulary, independent characters, and complex parsing together with over 200 locations into Arnold. There are also a number of new features, most important of which is the ability to 'become' any one of the four hobbits (Frodo, Pippin, Merry, and Sam). This means that if you get stuck or need help from another hobbit, you can swap characters and administer help.

The vocabulary is considerably larger than *The Hobbit* and claims about 800 words. The blurb also claims that this is 'the largest choice of words ever offered in any home computer game'. Those of you who have played *Worm in Paradise* or *Hitchhiker's* will doubtless (and justifiably) disagree with this minor bit of hype. However, there's no doubt that vocabulary problems are not the main cause of frustration in this game.

No, the main cause of frustration, my fellow Pilgs, is the incredibly slow speed at which the whole thing moves. There's so much for the program to do that just changing a location can take 20 seconds. Now that may not sound like a long time, but if you want to trot around foiling Black Riders and exploring the countryside, you're going to spend half your time waiting impatiently for your turn at the keyboard while the program buzzes away trying to keep everything in order.

And there's another problem, I'm afraid. Those of you who have played *The Hobbit* will be aware of the dreaded Hobbit-bugs that occasionally crop up, causing you to lose time or, worse, your life. *Lord of the Rings* is without doubt going to provide bug-hunters with an absolute field-day.

Let's just take a simple picnic beside the river. Eating regularly is an important part of the game, since yer average hobbit is a

DVENTURE

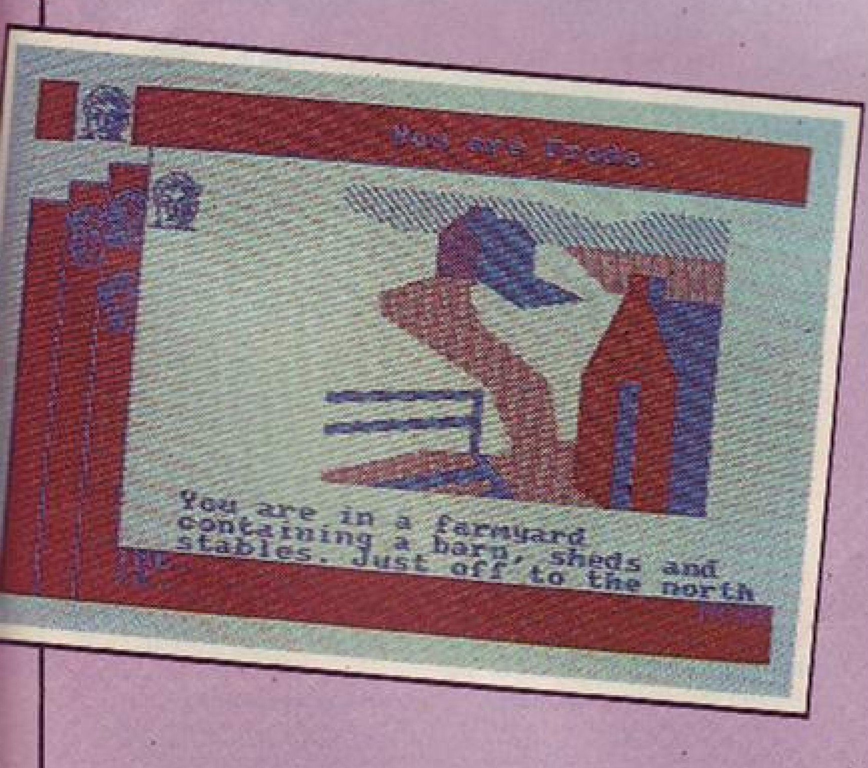
bit shaky on the legs unless he stops for a slap-up meal every few minutes. Carrying some food, you decide to give some to Sam, who looks as if he could do with a sandwich. "You try to give the food to Sam," replies the program, "but Sam is too heavy"! I suppose this could mean that young Sam is a trifle overweight, and is therefore not allowed any food, but I doubt it.

At that point, you decide to have a drink of some of the wine in the bottle that Sam is carrying. 'Say to Sam "Give the bottle to me"', you type expectantly. Sam hands over the bottle, and you're just about to have a quick swig when you discover that the bottle has mysteriously disappeared. Sam hasn't got it, since he just gave it to you, but you haven't got it either. Very odd.

As I said, I think Melbourne House have been just a bit too ambitious with this one. Take the screen display, for example. They've used a clever system where the faces of the hobbits are shown at the side of the screen (see the screen-shot) as if on the pages of a book. When they're present in your location, they are on the top page, otherwise they slip back through the book.

This is a nice idea, but again it fails to be really impressive in practice. First, the screen mode used doesn't allow sufficient resolution for the faces to be all that meaningful (and certainly not attractive): second, each time you change location you will, if you're accompanied by hobbits, have to wait for their little pictures to be redrawn in the appropriate part of the display. Quite unnecessary, and rather tiresome after a while.

In fact, the screen display is really a bit dubious from the beginning. You can see from the screenshot of the opening scene (in the hobbit-hole with the famous green door) that the graphics are rather simple, to say the least. In fact, the problem is worse than that since there's a lot of wasted space on the screen, and the area available for text is consequently rather limited (and in 40 column mode as well). As a result, the text gets scrolled up out of sight rather sooner than one would like, especially in locations where there's a lot to see.



With all the programming expertise available, you'd think Melbourne House would have split the screen and had four colour graphics when necessary and 80-column text (with a 40 column option for those with colour monitors, though I find I can read 80 column text on mine without too much trouble).



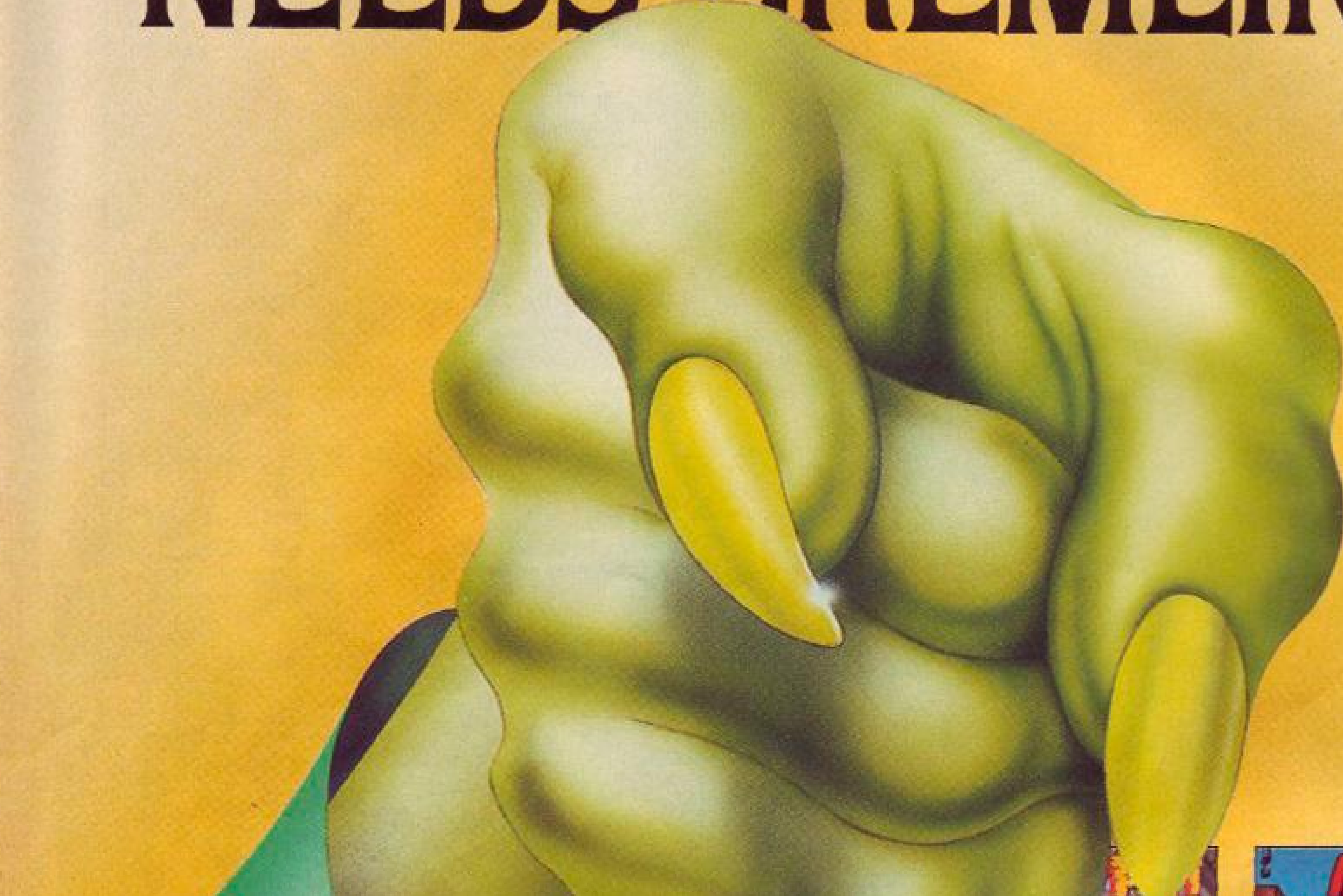
When you get down to playing the game, the slow speed remains an irritation, but there's no doubt that the original story of young Frodo travelling off to destroy the dreaded Ring of Power is tremendously gripping. Despite the delays and the bugs, I much enjoyed playing the game and found the atmosphere both gripping and surprisingly true to the original, though there are a number of very significant differences in the story-line.

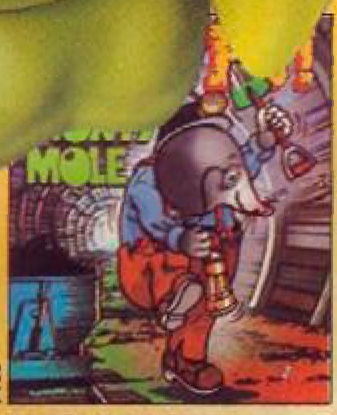
In fact, I found the design of the plot in the game very good indeed. Sometimes it pays to have read the book (make sure you call yourself 'Underhill' at the appropriate moments), but I couldn't help laughing when I followed Strider from the inn. In the book, Strider leads you eventually to safety, but in the game he leads you on a right merry-go-round, has a quick chat with a talking bird, and then leads you all the way back to the Inn (or thereabouts) and straight into the arms of the Black Riders!

In conclusion, therefore, there's no doubt that *Lord of the Rings* is a program with some serious design faults. However, it's also a considerable challenge and since I haven't finished the game yet I feel somewhat reluctant to pass final judgement on it. I'll be writing more about it next month, but in the meantime I have a sneaky suspicion that this game has really drawn the line beyond which cassette-based games cannot go. It tries to do an awful lot, but falls on its face rather too often in the process. I can't help feeling that it will go down in history as the last mega-cassette adventure that launched us into a world of disc-based programs.

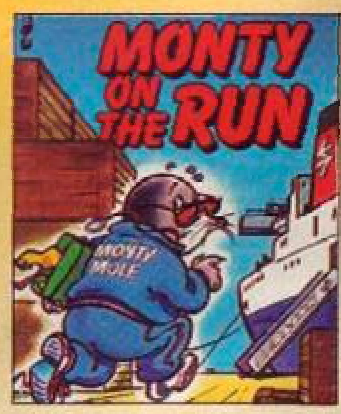
In the meantime, if you've got the cash handy, I don't think you'll regret buying it. If you're skint, you could perhaps club together with some friends and get a copy to pass round – whichever you do, I think you'll be witnessing the end of an era in home-computer adventures. From now on, if it's going to be big, it's got to be on disc.

YOUR AMSTRAD NEEDS GREMLIN !!





TAPE & DISK



TAPE & DISK

WANTED MONTY MOLE

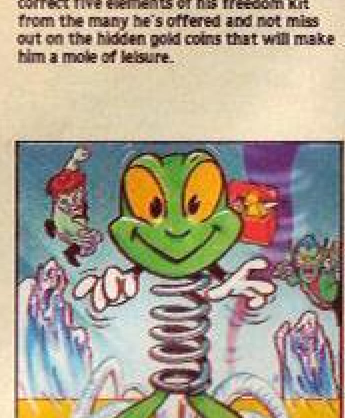
Monty makes a daring,coal snatching raid to his local pit. Filling his bucket as he dodges the trundling coal crushers and roaming coal drills . With his bucket filled, Monty makes his escape, only to surface and find his way is blocked . Seizing his only chance Monty collects the secret ballot papers and vote casting scroll. But when it comes to the heavy stuff a personal bodyguard of super fit pickets and deadly flying hairsprays, put up an almighty struggle with our valiant Mole.

MONTY ON THE RUN

Super fit and desperate for freedom, our frightened hero finds refuge with the criminal underworld who offer him his chance to breathe fresh air and bask in the sunlight once again. Monty must select the correct five elements of his freedom kit from the many he's offered and not miss out on the hidden gold coins that will make him a mole of leisure.



TAPE



TAPE

ABU SIMBEL PROFANATION

Over 3000 years ago, Ramses II built the Temple of Abu Simbel. For over 30 centuries, all its secrets have remained hidden to human eyes .

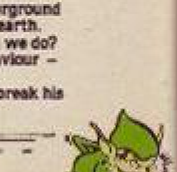
Johnny Jones, hero and explorer extraordinaire, has entered Abu Simbel and fallen victim to the Pharoah's spell. In order to continue his adventures he must free himself from the spell, reach the mortuary chamber and discover its secrets!

THING ON A SPRING

The evil goblin is wreaking havoc on an unsuspecting world, casting spells and banishing its treasures to his underground factory deep in the bowels of the earth. How can he be stopped? What can we do? Who can do it? There's only one saviour – our hero – Thing on a Spring!
Complete the magical jigsaw and break his fiendish spell.

TAPE 8.95

DISK 12.95



Gremlin Graphics Software Limited 1985. Alpha House, 10 Carver Street, Sheffield S1 4FS. Tel: (0742) 753423



RUNESTONE

Firebird, £7.95 cass

This is a real humdinger, this one is. It has it's history way back in the dark ages of computer adventures when it was first proposed by Games Workshop. Much water (some of it rather muddy) has passed under the bridge since then, and now Firebird have brought it out on the Amstrad as one of their 'Hot' Releases.

The game concerns the struggles of three main characters, Morval the Warrior, Eliador the Elf, and Greymarel the Wizard against the evil Kordomir. Belorn, their homeland, is under constant attack from the Orcs who swoop down from the North to pillage and conquer on Kordomir's behalf.

At the beginning of the game, the situation is heavily weighted against Morval and his companions. All they (and you) know is that somehow you must recover the mystical Runestone and use it to destroy Kordomir.

This game has strong similarities to *Lords of Midnight*. You can control three characters, and the display shows the countryside immediately adjacent to the character concerned. You can move around by first facing your character in one of the four main compass directions and then typing MOVE or GO (or just M).

However, the similarities to *Midnight* are rather deceptive. Although there are plot parallels as well, the two programs are really quite different. *Runestone* is a more ambitious program in many respects – it accepts complex inputs such as 'Say to Eliador 'Give Morval the shield'' or 'Fight Noggin with the axe'. Furthermore, the program runs in real-time, manipulating the other characters and engineering your destruction while you sit and gaze at the screen.



Pretty eh? The figure in the top right-hand corner won't hesitate to stick his tongue out if you do something stupid...

And the screen is well worth gazing at. The display is nothing short of excellent – considerably better than *Midnight* and beautifully drawn. The landscape scrolls very smoothly and shows great detail. There's also a picture of your character at the top of the screen who blinks and grimaces very realistically every few seconds – just to remind you that the Orcs are on your tail.

Although you know roughly what's going on when you start the game, *Runestone* leaves you very much to your own devices. In *Lords of Midnight* the player has a good idea of his objectives and how (in theory, at least) to achieve them. However, in *Runestone* things are far less clear and you have to do a lot of discovering to find out what will best serve your cause. For example, you soon stumble across a magic staff which you know (from the blurb) is extremely important in the game. How and when to use it, however, is up to you to discover. In this respect, *Runestone* is much more like a traditional adventure than *Lords of Midnight*, which was in essence more of a war-game.

The program comes with a very attractive but not exactly detailed map – just enough to get you going in the right direction without giving too much away. There's also a booklet (beautifully produced) that gives you some background info and, of course, instructions on how to play the game. Special features include a dump to printer command. The only slight annoyance is that (again like *Midnight*) you can't restart the game if you get killed without reloading.

Actually playing *Runestone* is a joy. The display is particularly impressive, with an attractively re-designed character set that scrolls very swiftly up and away each time you change location. The vocabulary isn't in fact very large, and (like *Midnight*) there are a large number of empty locations, but the parser is very intelligent and you won't find yourself having too many communication problems.

There's a tremendous sense of humour in the game. If, for example, you enter a command that the program doesn't recognise, then the figure at the top of the screen will frown and stick his tongue out! Trying to do the wrong thing will frequently receive a witty response. While controlling Morval, I attempted to 'Climb the tree'...'Morval is getting desperate!' the program replied with dry humour.

My only real criticism of *Runestone* is that you can only move in four directions. This involves a lot of unnecessary moving about in order to get your character into a particular location and I can't imagine that it would have been too difficult to include North-East, South-West, and so on. As it is, if you get stuck in a cul-de-sac, or are negotiating a number of different obstacles at once, you find yourself having to go first one way and then the other to make progress. Since there's a sense of urgency in the game, with Arnold bleeping every few seconds to remind you that time is passing, this slowing of the pace is rather frustrating.

Runestone is a very ambitious program. Let's hope Firebird bring out some more games like this. Paul Jacobs, speaking for the company, said that he was currently looking at 'a very significant adventure-related project'. Keep your fingers crossed.

AL-STRAD

Rhinosoft, £2.50 cass

The Pilg regularly receives adventures written by readers, and I'm pleased to be able to squeeze this one in, since it's considerably better than the average effort and well worth the £2.50 asking price.

The game was written by Paul Gill (who calls his operation Rhinosoft) and concerns the struggles of Al-Strad to rescue Sally Software from the Evil Sink. Despite a certain air of childishness about the choice of names, this game is in fact very nicely put together and often amusing. There are many scarcely-veiled references to well-known figures and companies in the computer industry, including a rather unkind stab at Kevin Toms of Addictive Software, who you find in the form of a wax-work in his underground offices next to the Masterchronic Room.

Although it's text-only, Paul has gone to a lot of trouble here, redesigning his own character set and using windows for locations and input. The vocabulary is small by modern standards, but there enough locations to keep you busy and the puzzles are logical and sometimes extremely tricky.

There are some obvious influences from other adventure programs. Like Scott Adams, Paul advises you that 'I can't...yet!' if you try to something at the wrong time or with insufficient resources. There's also a classic maze, called (appropriately) The Forest of Deja-Vu, and the location descriptions are amusing, original, well-written, and with not a spelling mistake to be seen! My only real quibble is that the program was obviously not written with green-screen users in mind, since the choice of colour combinations is at times not at all suitable.

Anyone with £2.50 to spare could do worse than order a copy from Paul. His address is 19A Bradgate Avenue, Cheadle, Cheshire, SK8 3AQ. *Al-Strad* is a good example of how a simple, home-brewed game can still give a Pilgrim a challenge and keep him amused as he struggles to find Sink's Lair...

	Atmosphere	Interaction	challenge	AA Rating
LORD OF THE RINGS	84%	86%	79%	85%
RUNESTONE	70%	80%	75%	80%
AL-STRAD	68%	49%	58%	68%

Red Hot Top Ten!

All you eager Pilgrims have been inundating the Amstrad Action office with your votes for this month's Readers Top Ten Adventures —not surprising, really, since there's a free game each month for the lucky adventurer whose vote is first out of the hat!

It has to be admitted that the results of the voting came as some surprise to the Pilg. Somehow I thought we'd seem more of the traditional games in the list – *Colossal Adventure*, for example (which got only one mention), but in retrospect it was truly heartening to see *Never-Ending Story* take first place. It's exciting to see a true up-to-date adventure from a company not much known for adventuring get such a resounding vote of confidence. Let's hope Ocean take note and bring out some more titles!

The other entries were rather more predictable, though I was surprised at the popularity of *Forest at the World's End* from Interceptor, which the Pilg found to be a bit of a walk-over when he played it, completing the entire game in 50 minutes. However, it was one of the earlier releases on the Amstrad and must therefore figure in quite a few collections.

Lord of the Rings didn't make it into the charts, but then it hasonly just appeared in the shops, so in fact I'm surprised that it got any votes at all – six to be precise. It was however the one game that most readers wanted to have if they were lucky enough to win a free game. Not surprising, since it costs fifteen quid!

Here, then, is this month's line-up. Get your votes in NOW for next month, and you too could walk away with your most-wanted game!

This month's lucky Pilgrim

Martin Dallimer of Worcester was first out of the hat this month, and walks off with a mint copy of *Lord of the Rings* from Melbourne House. Judging by the number of people who wanted this game, it could turn up in a high position in the charts – but only your votes can decide. Use the form to get YOUR vote in as soon as possible.

Martin's favourite game was *Red Moon*, which he found 'difficult to solve, and had a good use of magik'. Looks like the magik's worked for you, Martin, and I hope you enjoy *Lord of the Rings* – drop me a line and let me know how you get on with it.

1	Never Ending Story	Ocean
2	Forest at the Worlds End	Interceptor
3	Red Moon	Level 9
4	Worm in Paradise	Level 9
5	Marsport	Gargoyle
6	Emerald Isle	Level 9
7	The Hobbit	Melbourne House
8	Ring of Darkness	Wintersoft
9	Return to Eden	Level 9
10	Snowball	Level 9



To The Pilgrim.

My favourite three adventures are:

1. Game:________________ Company:________________
2. Game:________________ Company:________________
3. Game:________________ Company:________________

My reasons for putting game number one above as first choice are:

If I'm a lucky Pilgrim and win a free game, I should like to receive a copy of:

My address is (BLOCK CAPITALS ONLY):

They're in the bag!

Entries have been flooding in for our Infocom and GAC competitions. The results of both competitions will be announced in the May issue, so if you haven't got your entry in yet, DON'T DELAY! Fill in those forms (back issues available from Amstrad Action if you can't get hold of them at your newsagent) and you could turn your friends green with envy as you spend your evenings glued to *Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, or using your brand new disc-drive. Or, if you've the luck of the devil, doing both at once!!



This month's star topic seems to be the Pilg's review of *Genesis* and Incentive's *Graphics Adventure Creator*. Some of you wanted more details on the packages than I could fit into the space available, but it was the review of *Genesis* that provoked the most comment. The Pilg apologises for the brevity of the reviews – in retrospect I think I should have spread them over two issues, but since the products were getting a lot of publicity at the time I wanted to give you some info as quickly as possible.

I do, however, stick very strongly to the opinions I expressed in the reviews, and time plus greater familiarity with the opinions has not altered my views. Mr Keneally of Camel Micros wrote me a very long letter complaining that I hadn't looked closely enough at *Genesis* to do it justice. Unfortunately, I can't really accept his viewpoint, since I spent two days battling with his program and my slow progress with it was due more to the incomprehensibility of the manual than my lack of dedication.

However, Camel have recently issued an upgraded version of the program which has improved the graphics handling and offers a multi-command parser plus 'pixel positioning of user-defined characters'. If they've also improved the manual then at £8.50 it sounds like reasonable value – existing users can get an upgrade for £2.00. And if you do change the manual, Camel, send me a copy.

I'm afraid to say, however, that other readers shared my misgivings about *Genesis*, including the honourable Swervin (yes, that IS his name!) who writes: "You did not mention the ridiculous way movement is handled by *Genesis*. As an example, take a room with 4 exits. Instead of specifying the location to move the player to, you can only set a flag to indicate that the player can move in that direction. You must then have an action to look though all possible exits, find the one related to the current room, and then move the player to the new location. This must be done for ALL exits you create – in other words, if you have 50 locations and each has 4 exits then you will need nearly 200 command lines to cover all movement within the game."

Next into the postbag was Geronimo Jones (boy, do these Pilgrimshave strange names!), with a useful tip for *Gremlins* owners who have disc-drives: "I thought I would tell you how to put *Gremlins* on to disc. The short program to use is exactly the same as theone used to put *Robin of Sherwood* on disc, except that the first six numbers in the data statement should be changed to: 71,82,69,77,76,78. *Gremlins* will be put onto disc and uses 42K of space..."

The program in question can be found in the December Issue of Amstrad Action on the Pilgrim pages. Geronimo also gives some useful tips on *Snowball, Emerald Isle, and Erik the Viking* which I have included in this month's Clue Pot.

Tim Gurney of the Snowdonia National Park Motel is very cross with me for not answering his letters. "I've written to you six times up to now and all I want is to help other lost adventurers and I am getting bored trying to get a response". I'm sorry, Tim, but sometimes the Pilg gets a bit snowed under with mail, and although I do my utmost best to mention as many people as possible, someone has to get missed out. You've made it this time, and your address is in the Lords of Adventure column.

Finally, there's a very long letter from Mr Ahearn of Anerley Hill, London SE19, of which the following is an extract. I've printed it because I think it may provoke some interesting responses. Read it, Pilgrims, digest it, and then drop me a line with your thoughts: "I refer to your quotation by Margaret Austin of Level 9 Computing saying that wholesalers and retailers won't stock text-only games. I have strong views on this.

What is the point of having good atmospheric prose if it is in competition with pictures infinitely inferior to the mind's eye? If one must have graphics then they should be of the kind that will not hold up the action and distract the imagination: otherwise there should be a 'graphics-off' function with negligible loss of text screen space. Memory devoted to the screens should not be at the expense of the plot,interactiveness, or the player's facilities.

If graphics were so necessary then all adventures would be like *Knight Lore* whereas the current crop of text/graphics adventures are like nothing at all and are; notwithstanding the modern technology, creaking silent movies on a very small screen. In commercial practise, a graphics adventure cannot be a text adventure: the greater the pursuit of graphics the less the incentive for text: soon there will be nothing but interactive laser-disc telly and steam text-adventuring will be dead.

I think Level 9 is making a great mistake in joining the picture show: their strength does not, at present, lie in graphics. Someone must make the decision to break away from the general trend and go for the interactive novel or play. While making this choice may not make them rich, it will – with the competition elbowing each other off the other path – keep them in business. If distribution is a problem then mail order, backed up by advertising, their reputation, good reviews, and support by journalists should suffice."

I think Mr Ahearn may have a point. What do you think? Drop me a line and let me know.

Clue Sniffing With the Pilgrim

If a game's really getting up your nostrils, then don't despair – help is at hand. This month's tips come from the Notorious Geronimo Jones (well, he must be notorious with a name like that) and from Anthony Williams, who wants to know if he was the first person to complete *The Never-Ending Story*. Sorry, Anthony, there were others there before you, but you're the first person to send in tips on the game, so here goes..

NEVER ENDING STORY
Give the rats something to eat, but keep your distance
Say PLEASE if you want to finish the game!
An apple a day keeps the doctor away, but make sure you only eat it when you really need it.

ERIK THE VIKING
If you want the cat then weigh something silver in front of the guards
You will find Al Kwasarmi hiding in a strong wooden box

EMERALD ISLE
If you've got the idol, do the curator a favour and return it to its rightful place
Don't be afraid of the dark – you have to be brave if you're going to get anywhere in this game

SNOWBALL
Trouble with lasers? Reflect upon the situation

THE HOBBIT
To get a high score, make sure you return objects to where they came from
Trouble with the pale bulbous eyes on your return? Don't be in such a hurry...

ZORK
Yellow button opens your way, brown button closes water's way.
Hang on to the garlic
If you don't build a sandcastle, then at least try digging around.



THE LORDS OF ADVENTURE

Grovel before the Lords of Adventure!! These brave adventurers have risked their lives to bring back from the brink of darkness and disaster hints and tips that could save your lives! So, if you're stuck in a game, drop them a line (NOT forgetting to include an SAE) and they will do their best to answer your cry.

All games
Tony Treadwell, 17 Headley Way, Headington, Oxford, OX3 0LR. Tel. 0865 68637.

Warlord, Heroes of Karn, Forest at Worlds End, Dun Darach
Simon Marshall, 23 Springfield Way, Stockton Lane, York, N.Yorks, YO3 0HN. Tel: (York) 424008.

All Level 9 games, All Interceptor games, Robin of Sherwood (soon)
Peter Brown, 57 Ropers Avenue, Chingford, London, E4 9EG

Jewels of Babylon, Forest at World's End, Heroes of Karn, Message from Andromeda, Warlord, Hobbit, Never Ending Story, Red Moon.
Tim Gurney, Snowdonia National Park Motel, Ty'n y Maes, Bethesda, Gwynedd, LL57 3LX.

Meanwhile, what about you?! Have you finished a game recently, and would you like to offer help to others? If you would, drop me a line giving your name and address and the games you'er offering help on. Everlasting fame and fortune will come your way, not to mention the chance of making friends with people far and wide. If you're REALLY keen, you can include a phone number, but DON'T do so without first checking with other members of your household. You may receive many calls, and adventurers tend to keep strange hours! And if you're phoning one of the illustrious Lords, do please keep your calls to sociable hours – between 6.30pm and 10.00pm is generally the best time for most people.



Bugs! Bugs!! Bugs!!!

There have been several cries for help this month from Pilgrims battling bravely in *The Hobbit* and *Lord of the Rings*. "Try this one," says Mark White of Cork, "When you have the rope and sword from the trolls cave, go to Rivendell. When Elrond gives you some lunch, type 'Give all to Thorin'. When Thorin has accepted them, type 'Say to Thorin 'Give all to me''. Thorin carries a lot more than you would expect, including the dragon!"

Roy Phillips of Skelmersdale, who also had trouble with *The Hobbit*, now finds himself in trouble with *Lord of the Rings*. His problems are:

– going east through the hedge/tunnel from cottage. If you do not light match you will get on the screen 'You try to go east but 7' and the game freezes.

– if you become one of the characters inside the fissure and try to 'look', the number 7 appears again and the game is frozen.

– if you type in 'Score' as instructed in the booklet, the program responds with 'I don't know the word 'Score''.

Ah well, keep up the good work, bug-hunters, and let me know what you come up with. Paula Byrne of Melbourne House says they're producing a hint sheet which will guide unlucky Pilgrims through any difficulties they may encounter in *Lord of the Rings* (including the more common bugs). "There are always bugs in Philip Mitchell's games," she says, "because they're so big."



ADVENTURE NEWS

Kentilla strikes out

After some rather undignified wrangling between Micromega and Amstrad, the latter have decided to release the graphics adventure *Kentilla* after all. This game was quite a hit on the Spectrum when it first came out, featuring some very attractive graphics and some rather unusual characters in the story, which concerns the fabulous sword Kentilla. All yours for £8.95.

Amstrad are also bringing out *Murdak* – a text adventure written by Locomotive Software, who wrote the operating Arnold system. Unfortunately Amstrad weren't particularly interested in discussing the subject over the 'phone – let's hope it arouses our interest more than it does theirs!

Mastertronic Magic

The masters of cheapo games are bringing you *Master of Magic* for 2.99, a dungeons-and-dragons type game which has already attracted good reviews on other machines. You should be able to see *Zzzzz..* soon, a graphics and text adventure with music that has you fast asleep and trying hard to wake up for the princely sum of £1.99. The Pilg has already seen *Zzzz..* on the Commodore and warns you not to expect too much, but then for £1.99 you can't be too choosy, can you?

Infocom Delays

The Pilg was unable to bring you follow-up reviews of the rest of the Infocom range as promised last month because Softsel are still having difficulty formatting them for the 6128 and 464. A number of CPC owners seem to have got hold of the PCW8256 versions, which will not run on their machines without patching. If you've got the wrong game, get in touch with Softsel and you may be able to exchange it.

Meanwhile, the masters for the 464 and 6128 versions are being duplicated as I write this, so the long awaited Infocom classics should be fully available by the time the mag hits the streets.

And more delays

Yes Minister from Mosaic/Level 9 is still awaiting release. 'No comment' said a spokesman from Mosaic in a tone of voice that spoke volumes. Keep your fingers crossed otherwise we may never see it!

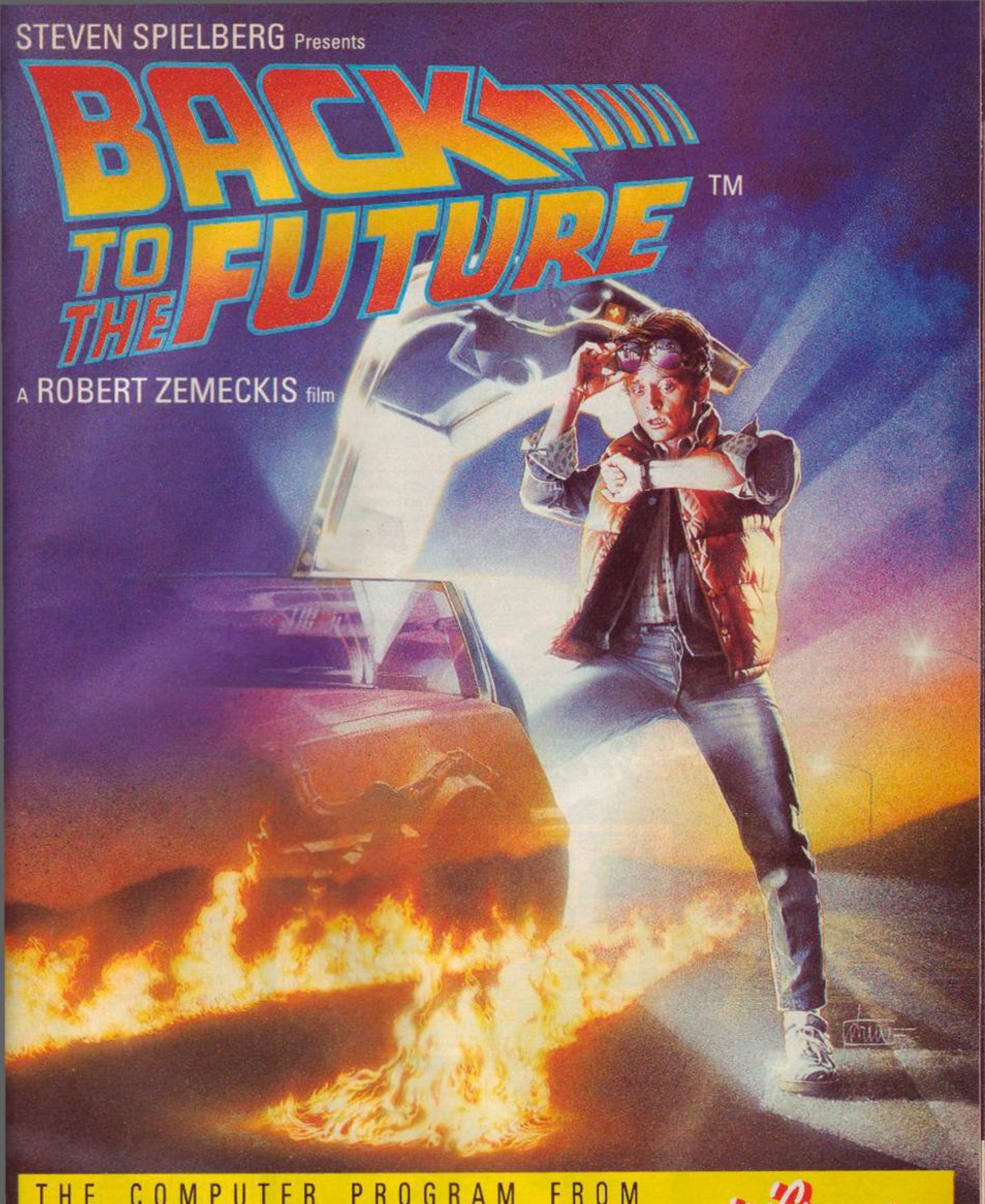
Interceptor's long-awaited *Earthquake* is still in the pipeline as well. Expect to see it in March. You may also hear news in March from Adventure International about the next *Questprobe* program, featuring the Fantastic Four and a much-vaunted enhanced vocabulary and parsing system.

Call the Pilgrim!

The Pilgrim can be contacted c/o Amstrad Action, The Old Barn, Somerton, Somerset, TA11 7PS. If you have a modem, then you can get me on Micronet/Prestel – my mailbox number is 919994854. You can also contact me on Telecom Gold at 83:JNL251.

The Pilg does his best to keep up with correspondents, but I'm afraid that I cannot answer individual pleas for help – if you're stuck in a game then check out the Lords of Adventure column, where there is bound to be a brave Pilgrim who can render more timely assistance than I. I'm always interested to hear from readers on any subject to do with adventures and will include your letters in the column whenever space permits.





STEVEN SPIELBERG Presents
BACK TO THE FUTURE ™
A ROBERT ZEMECKIS film

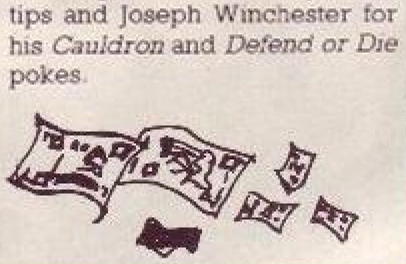


The section where your tips, pokes and devious game-busting ploys are relayed to the nation



The great Cheat Mode competition has come to an end and the three lucky winners of £100 each are Dean Adam of Cardiff for his *Nonterraqueous* map, tips and pokes, Nick Chaplin from Maidenhead for the first *Dun Darach* solution we received, and Tim Gilbert of Whitby for his *Airwolf* and *Covenant* pokes. It was tough deciding but the main criteria in all three winners cases were the quality and originality of the submissions – not just the quantity.

From now on there will be regular rewards every month; the three best contributions to these pages will receive £10 each. This month's lucky recipients are Paul Robson for his *Chimera* map and solution, O Cunningham for his *Fruity Frank* tips and Joseph Winchester for his *Cauldron* and *Defend or Die* pokes.

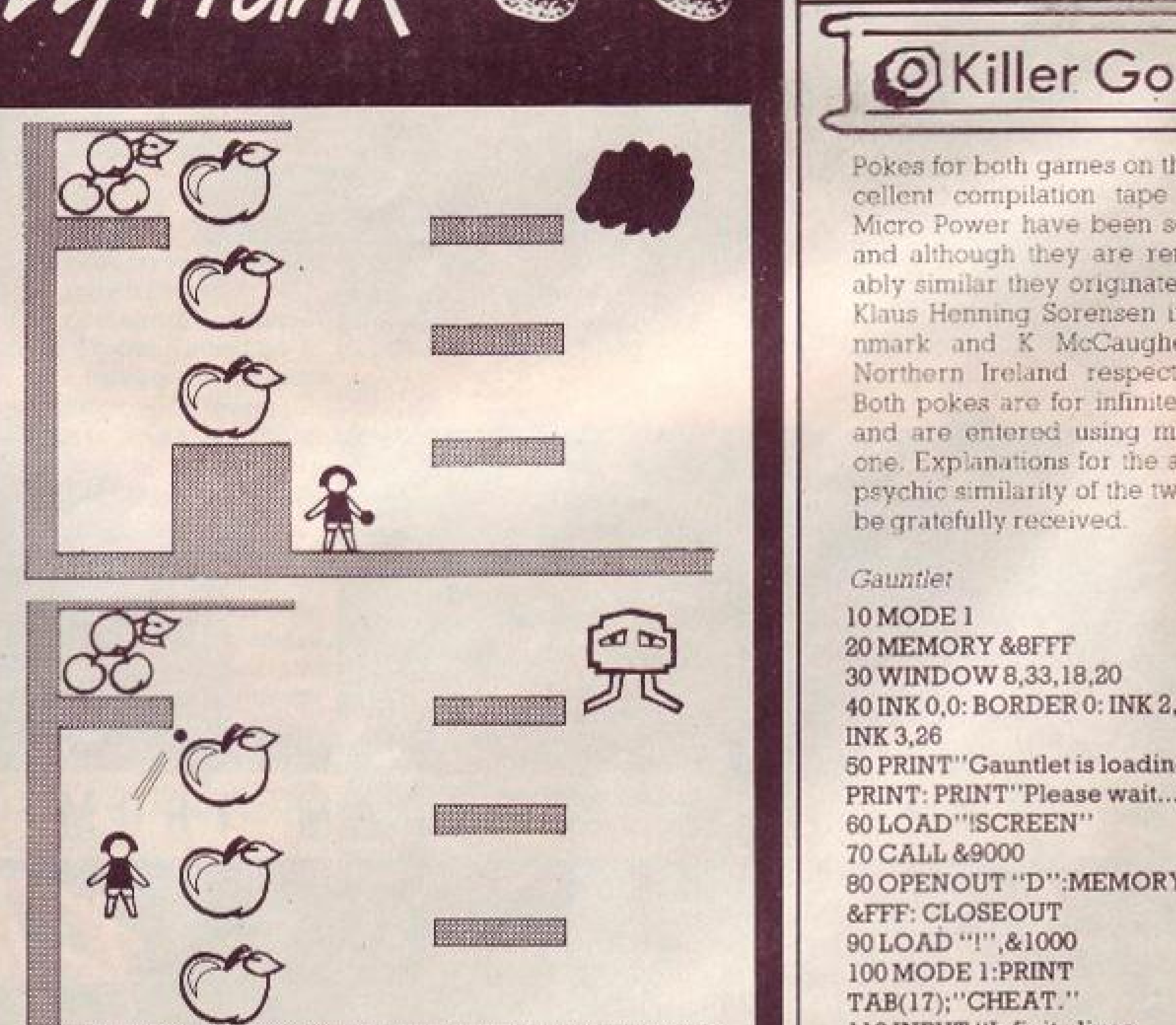


Fruity Frank

O Cunningham from Livingston has sent in a tip on the Kuma game that will allow you to get virtually infinite scores, if you've got the time! To set the cheat up takes time and patience but once achieved it pays big dividends.

What you're looking for is a screen where there is a fruit on the left hand side of the screen with three clearable squares beneath it. Three apples then have to be piled up on top of a square of earth, one column to the right. Then run over the hole from which the monsters appear to release the bonus monster before making a run for the pile of apples.

Running under the pile will leave you in an enclosed area with the fruit above and three apples on the right. By moving up to the second square from the bottom of the screen you can now fire the ball you carry through the gap between the top apple and the fruit. You can sit and shoot monsters in complete safety and amass a giant score, although it may take a while. The technique works like a charm – we just wonder how on earth OC thought of it.



Kung Fu & Number One

There's been a massive demand for transferring the two cover cassette games to disk and for pokes for them as well. Fortunately our readers have come up with the goods as usual – aren't you good to us! We're printing two routines for transferring the games to disk, the *Kung Fu* one being simpler than the one that appeared in the letters page last month. There are also infinite lives pokes for both games, all of which come to you thanks to Peter Featherstone in Leeds. Thanks to Steven Dunn of Cookham, Keith Payne of Ramsgate and LS Phillips of Treherbert for their excellent efforts as well.

We'll do *Kung Fu* first. All disk users have to do is place a blank disk in the drive, place the rewound tape in the recorder and run the program.

```
10 MODE 1
20 |TAPE:MEMORY 4999: LOAD
"LOADER2"
30 POKE 35011,201
40 CALL 35000
50 POKE 31011,205: POKE
31012,121: POKE 31013,93
60 |DISC
70 SAVE
"KUNGFU",B,5000,30000,31000
80 PRINT "Transfer completed"
```

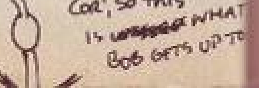
For infinite lives, using method one, tape users should use the

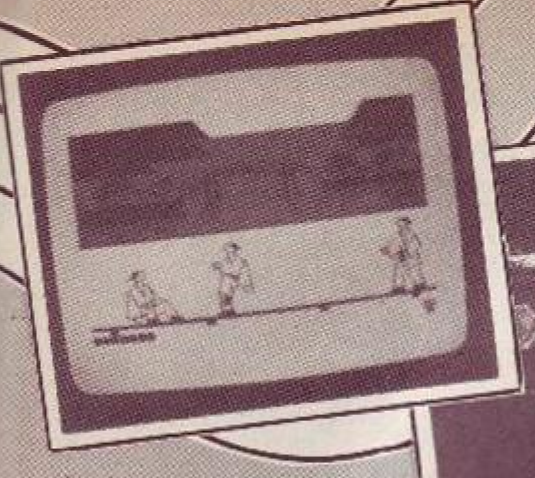
Killer Gorilla

Pokes for both games on the excellent compilation tape from Micro Power have been sent in and although they are remarkably similar they originate from Klaus Henning Sorensen in Denmark and K McCaughey in Northern Ireland respectively. Both pokes are for infinite lives and are entered using method one. Explanations for the almost psychic similarity of the two will be gratefully received.

Gauntlet

```
10 MODE 1
20 MEMORY &8FFF
30 WINDOW 8,33,18,20
40 INK 0,0: BORDER 0: INK 2,6:
INK 3,26
50 PRINT"Gauntlet is loading":
PRINT: PRINT"Please wait..."
60 LOAD"!SCREEN"
70 CALL &9000
80 OPENOUT "D":MEMORY
&FFF: CLOSEOUT
90 LOAD "!",&1000
100 MODE 1:PRINT
TAB(17);"CHEAT."
110 INPUT "Infinite lives
(y/n)?",a$
```





above program with line 80 deleted and lines 60 and 70 replaced by:

```
60 POKE 18924,0
70 CALL 31000
```

Disk users can get infinite lives by resetting the machine after transfer and typing in and ENTERing this line.

```
MEMORY 4999: LOAD
"KUNGFU": POKE 18924,0:
CALL 31000
```

The procedure for transferring *Number One* is the same. Just place a blank disk in the drive, the rewound cassette in the recorder and type in and run the program.

```
10 MODE 1
20 |TAPE: MEMORY 4999:
LOAD "LOADERN1"
30 POKE 36900,201
40 CALL &9000
50 |DISC
60 SAVE
"NUMBER1",B,990,31060,29977
70 PRINT "Transfer completed"
```

For infinite lives, using method 1, tape users should use the above listing with line 70 deleted and lines 50 and 60 replaced by:

```
50 POKE 30087,0: POKE 30319,x
60 CALL 29977
```

X in line 50 should be replaced by a number representing the number of crystals to be collected on each level.

Disk users can get the same effect by resetting the machine after transfer and typing in and ENTERing the following.

```
MEMORY 4999:
LOAD"NUMBER1": POKE
30087,0: POKE 30319,x:CALL
29977
```

Where X should again be replaced by the number of crystals you want to collect at each stage.

& Gauntlet

```
120 IF
UPPER$(MID$(A$,1,1)) = "y"
THEN POKE &4961,0 ELSE INPUT
"Number of ships (Max
99)?",A:POKE &3BED,
INT(A/10)*16 + (A/10-
INT(A/10))*10
130 INPUT "Number of bombs
(Max 99)?",A: POKE &3BF2,
INT(A/10)*16 + (A/10-
INT(A/10))*10
140 INPUT "Number of men (64
or less)?",A: IF A<64 THEN
POKE &3C40,A: ELSE GOTO 210
150 PRINT "Have fun and press a
key.": CALL &BB18
160 CALL &1D6A
```

Killer Gorilla

```
10 MODE 1
20 MEMORY &3FFF
30 WINDOW 8,33,18,20
40 INK 0,0:BORDER 0: INK
2,6:INK 3,26
50 PRINT"Killer Gorilla is
loading": PRINT: PRINT"Please
wait..."
60 LOAD "!SCREEN"
70 CALL &8200: MEMORY &1FFF
80 LOAD "!GAME"
90 POKE 17429,0
100 CALL &4100
```



Amsoft Extravaganza Winners

We've also picked the winners for the best playing tips and pokes on the six Amsoft titles that appeared in issue two. Each will receive £100 of Amsoft software – well worth having these days.

The winners are, David Drysdale of Redcar, Anthony Collins of Bromford Gerry Hughes of Cranleigh, MA Tyson and PJ White of Sheffield, Tim Walsha of Harpsden and Brian Johnson of Metheringham. Well done all, hope you enjoy the prizes.

Brian Bloodaxe



Another infinite lives poke from K McCaughey from Northern Ireland, again entered by method 1.

```
10 OPENOUT "DUMMY"
20 MEMORY 499
30 CLOSEOUT
40 LOAD "!AXE4",500
50 PEN 1
60 POKE &6854,0
70 CALL &6070
```

Space Hawks

A quickie infinite lives poke using method 1, from B Edwardson of Lymm.

```
10 MEMORY &4E20-1
20 LOAD "CODE"
30 POKE &5ADD,0
40 CALL &4E20
```



Poke methods

This is the section where we explain how to input the majority of the pokes using two types of method.

Method 1: Type in the listing. Rewind the game tape. Type RUN followed by pressing enter. Follow on screen prompts to load the game.

Method 2: The tape header/loader/title screen, comprising usually of one or two data blocks has to be skipped. Rewind the game tape. Type in CAT followed by enter and play the tape. Watch the screen and a message will come up.

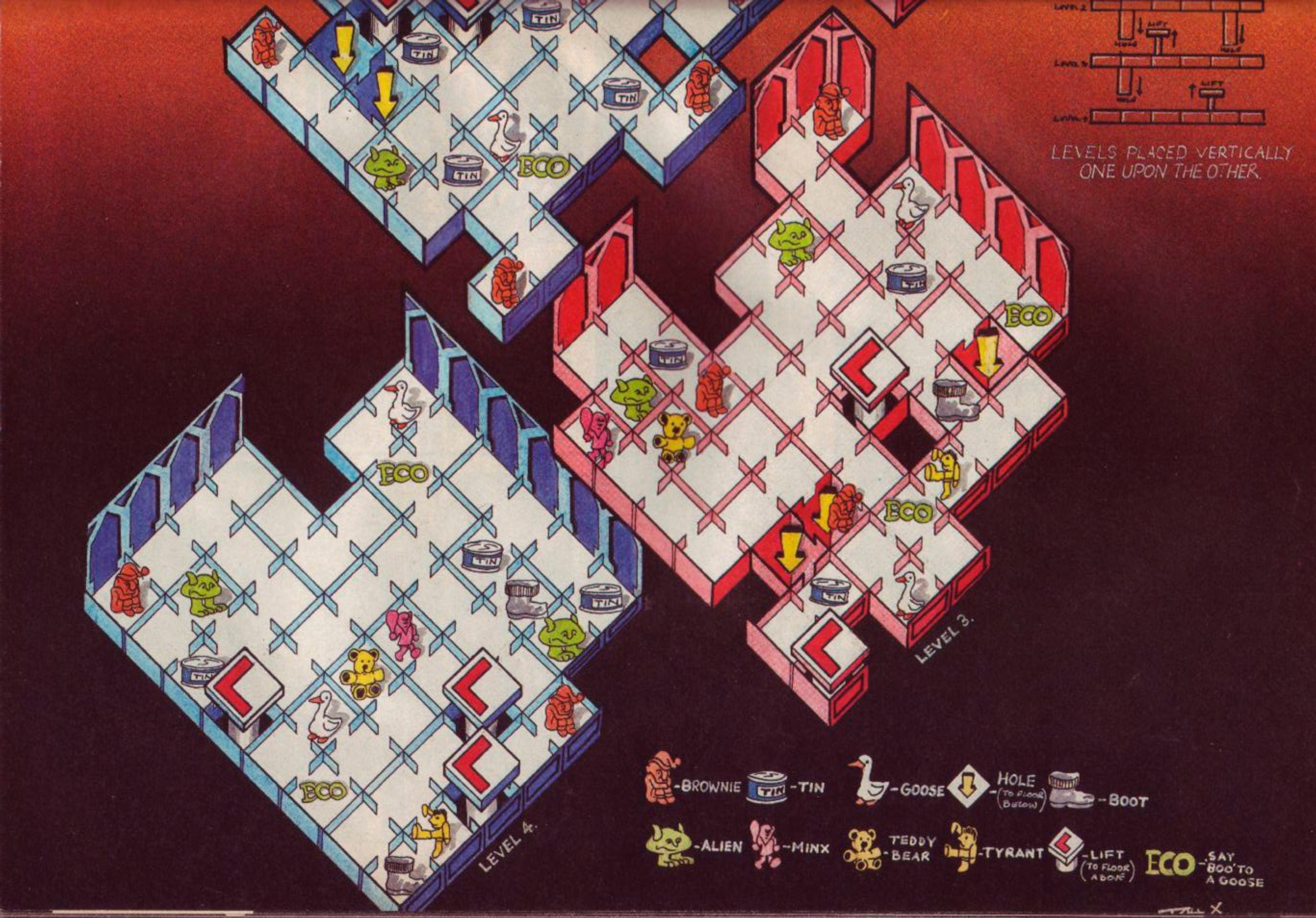
Found FILENAME block 1 OK

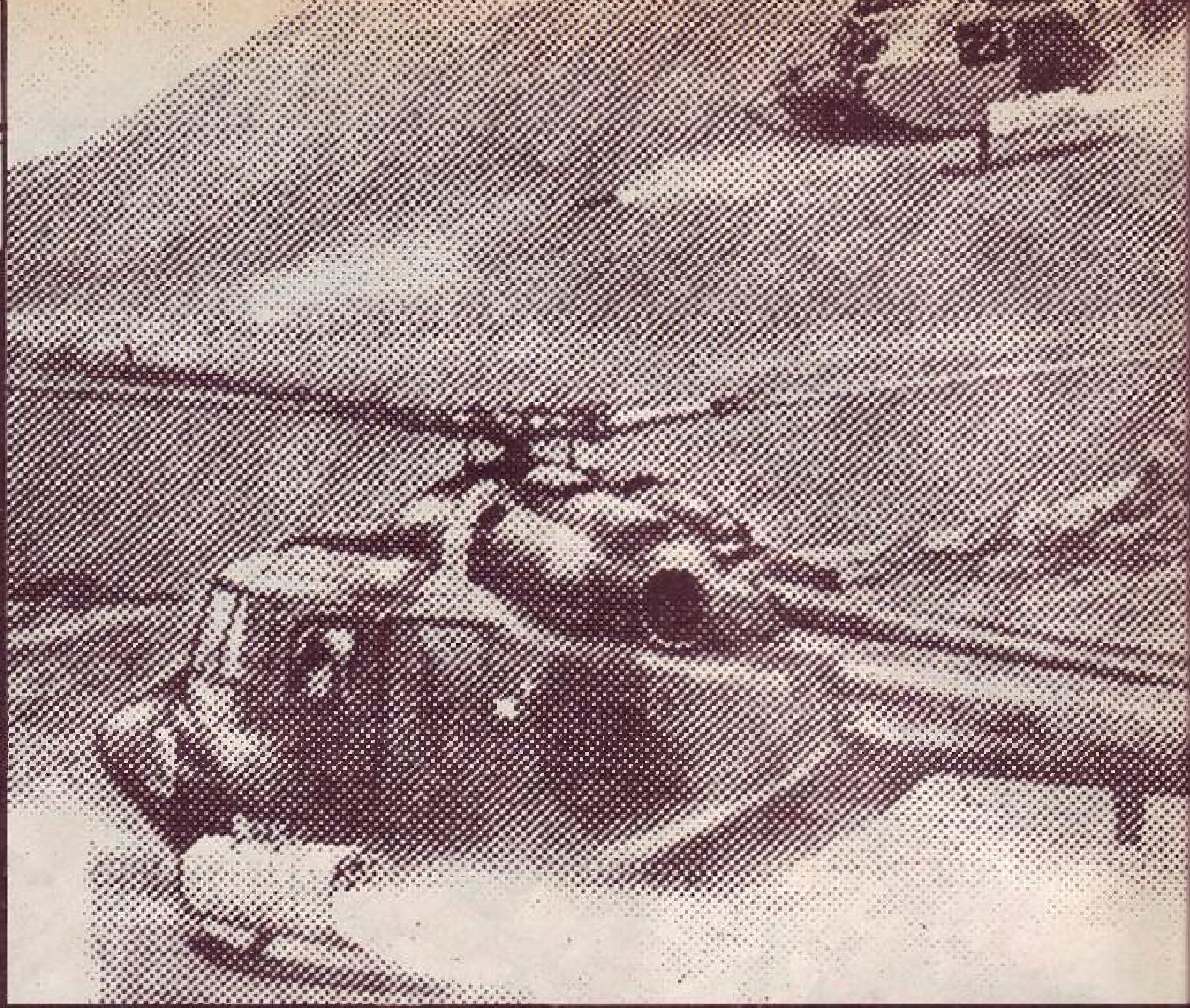
where FILENAME will be replaced by the name of the loading section. The next message that appears will be the main program appearing in the same style.

Found MAINFILE block 1 OK

where the MAINFILE will be different for each game. Note the point on the tape counter at which this second file appears. Stop the tape and rewind to just before that point. Type in the program and RUN it. Then press play on the tape deck.


SWEEVO'S WORLD
MAPPED BY
IAN BOFFIN
LEVEL 1.
LEVEL 2.
TIN
ECO
LEVEL 1
LIFT


LEVELS PLACED VERTICALLY
ONE UPON THE OTHER.
LEVEL 3.
LEVEL 4.
-BROWNIE
-TIN
-GOOSE
-HOLE (TO FLOOR BELOW)
-BOOT
-ALIEN
-MINX
-TEDDY BEAR
-TYRANT
-LIFT (TO FLOOR ABOVE)
ECO -SAY 'BOO' TO A GOOSE



Combat Lynx

If previous month's tips haven't been enough to help you with the helicopter classic then here's a great poke from Rhys Jones of Peterborough to increase the carryable weight of the Lynx from 2045 kgs to 4095 kgs. It's entered using method 1.

```
10 MODE 1
20 MEMORY 5630
30 LOAD "MAIN"
40 POKE 27740,255: POKE
27741,15: POKE 27910,255: POKE
27911,15: POKE 28300,52: POKE
28301,48: POKE 28302,57: POKE
28303,53
50 CALL 32138
```

Alternatively you can follow the tips sent in by Manjit Singh Biant who reckons he can improve on what's been advised before.

Load up two air to air missiles and as many mines as possible use AA missiles to clear area if needed. Then switch to mines. Go north releasing mines (avoid the base) then repeat this for the other seven compass directions to form a protective field around the base.

By now base 2 may be under attack – leave it and concentrate on base 3. With 2 AA missiles and 2 mines go to base 3, land the helicopter gently on the ground to cool if you overheat. Lay mines to the north and east until you run out as this is where the enemy often attack from. When the mines are used, pick up passengers and ferry them to base 1 (to improve efficiency) before returning to base 3 with more mines to lay around it.

On other levels you can try to defend more bases in this manner depending on how efficient you are. If base 3 is destroyed concentrate on building up base 1's defences by laying the minefield further and further out. All the enemy will now be heading for base 1 and raids can be made on incoming vehicles.

This is done by approaching the enemy at high speed, flying over and quickly coming back up behind them and when directly above them dropping a load of mines. This should destroy the vehicle and leave some mines for later enemies to run into.

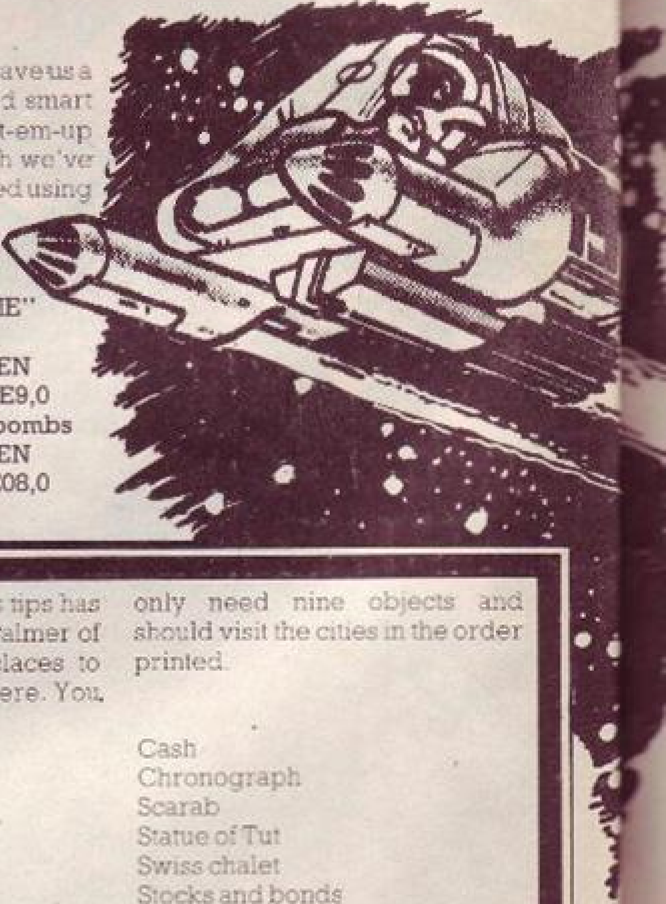
If reinforcements arrive don't go after them since they will be far off and you won't be able to carry many weapons there to attack them. Instead find out which

Cauldron

This poke from Joseph Winchester of Cambridge gives infinite lives on the bewitching game from Palace and is entered using method 2 so that you can skip the first block of the program called CAULDRON BLOCK 1.

```
10 FOR P = &40 TO 125
20 READ A$:A = A XOR VAL(A$)
30 NEXT
40 IF A<>10 THEN PRINT"Error
in data statement, please check
it":STOP
50 RESTORE
60 FOR P = &2000 TO &203D
70 READ A$:POKE
P,VAL("&" + A$)
80 NEXT
90 CALL &2000
100 21,00,20,11,40,00,
06,40,ED,B0,C3,4D,00,
6,4,C5,3E,52,11,18,0,
21,9E,0,CD,A1,BC,3A,
A4,0,CB,7F,20,5,E6,3,
CD,E,BC,2A,9E,0,ED,5B,
A0,0,3E,4C,CD,A1,BC,
C1,10,D9,3E,0,32,4D,DA,
C3,0,C8
```

Defend or die



Joseph Winchester also gave us a poke for infinite lives and smart bombs on this shoot-em-up rather than 99 lives which we've printed before. It's entered using method 1.

```
10 MEMORY &3FFF
20 LOAD "DEFEND OR DIE"
30 INPUT" Infinite lives
(y/n)?",a$:IF a$ = "y" THEN
POKE &60E8,0:POKE &60E9,0
40 INPUT" Infinite smart bombs
(y/n)?",a$:IF a$ = "y" THEN
POKE &5E07,0:POKE &5E08,0
50 CALL &4025
```

Hacker

An update to last months tips has been received from JB Palmer of Havant clarifying the places to visit and what to trade there. You only need nine objects and should visit the cities in the order printed.

BERNE	Cash
LONDON	Chronograph
CAIRO	Scarab
ATHENS	Statue of Tut
AGRA(not,Delhi)	Swiss chalet
NEW YORK	Stocks and bonds
TOKYO	Pearls
PEKING	35mm camera
SAN FRANCISCO	Beatles album
WEST INDIES(not Mexico City)	Jade





direction they're coming from and lay a stretch of mines across their path.

In general the heaviest forces attack between the north to south-east directions so concentrate the mines there. Stick to these general tactics and good scores should be possible (with a little practice of course).

Poke problems

There have been a number of problems and queries this month, most of them to do with the *Jet Set Willy* poke printed in the Christmas issue. Unfortunately we didn't state that this was only for the original Amstrad version of *JSW* and not the version on the *They Sold a Million* compilation tape. This was a shortened version of the game which was the same size as the *JSW* released on other computers.

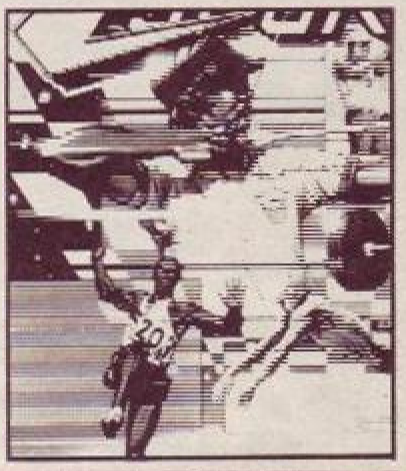
As yet we haven't received any pokes for that version of the game but as soon as we do they'll be printed because there's obviously a lot of demand for them. So if you've been getting the dreaded line "Memory full in 60" when you try the poke – you've got the wrong version and will have to wait till somebody cracks it.

The problem was made worse for us by the discovery that the poke we printed included crucial machine code routines which appear to have been lifted directly from a similar program printed in *Amstrad Computer User*.

Our apologies go to *ACU* and to the people who produced that original program.

HYPERSPORTS

The weightlifting event in *Hypersports* has also been causing people a lot of trouble. It appears that it is so finely tuned, needing incredibly fast waggling and stamina, as to be impossible. As yet there seems no solution to the problem, but if anyone can come up with a poke or other cheat to get round the problem we'd be delighted to print it.

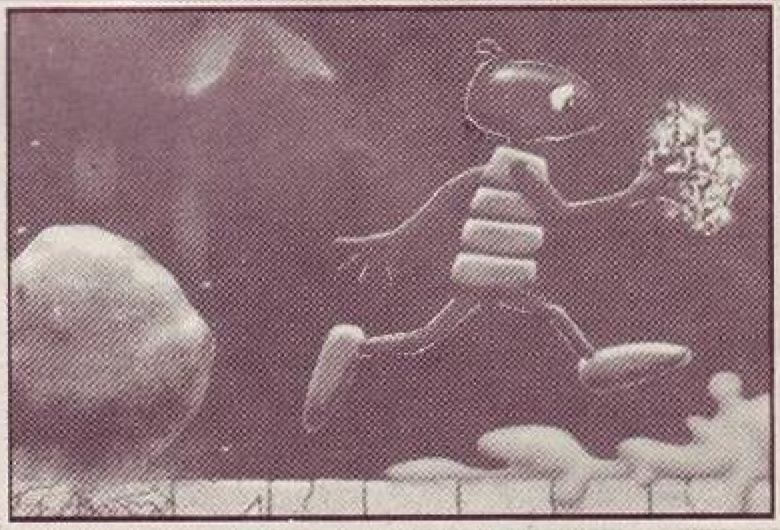


Boulderdash

That man Tim Gilbert from Whitby has been at it again and produced another original and very useful poke – this time infinite lives for the classic *Boulderdash*. It's input using method one and just as a bonus we're reprinting Tim's poke for *Airwolf* that appeared in issue 2. This allows you to explore the whole playing area although you can't complete the game using it. Don't go off the "legal" screens or the game will crash completely. This is also entered using method one but there is no on-screen prompt to press play – just have the tape rewound and press play after running the listing.

Boulderdash

```
10 MODE 1
20 MEMORY 29999
30 FOR T = 30000 TO 30024
40 READ A$:POKE
T,VAL("&"+A$)
50 NEXT T
60 PRINT "PUT BOULDERDASH
IN RECORDER AND PRESS
PLAY"
70 CALL 30000
80 DATA 21,00,02,11,25,
70,3E,87,CD,A1,BC,21,80,
1B,36,00,23,36,00,23,36,
00,C3,52,1F
```





Airwolf

```
10 PEN 15
20 BORDER 14
30 MODE 0
40 OPENOUT "D": MEMORY
&3E7:CLOSEOUT
50 FOR X = 0 TO 15:READ A: INK
X,A:NEXT
60 LOAD"!PROG"
70 BORDER 4
80 MODE 0
90 PAPER 9
100 POKE &7B33,0: POKE
&7B34,0: POKE &7B35,0
110 CALL &68A8
120 DATA
14,26,0,23,17,22,15,6,26,4,23,2,15,
26,13,0
```





BRUCE LEE

Several people have written in to let us know about some cheats on US Gold's oriental game. The general one is that where you know there is a doorway to be revealed you can walk Bruce right up to it, lie down and, hey presto! – you're through it. This means you can take some nice short cuts. Things are made even easier by getting 99 lives.

To do this you just have to have nine falls left, in the two player game, when picking up the two circles (one on top of the other) that give an extra life. Completing the game should now be easy since you can afford to lose lots of lives on the screen with four levels of moving white dots while trying to get past it.

Back to where it all began...



On June 21, 1948, a group of distinguished scientists witnessed the birth of the world's first stored program computer, pictured here. Built mainly out of war surplus thermionic valves, it proved to be far too large for the room in which it was to be housed and so overflowed into the corridor. It was known as the Manchester Mark 1.

NOW – nearly 30 years later – the city which saw the birth of the computing revolution is about to host an event dedicated to a range of machine no bigger than typewriters and costing only a fraction of the price, yet infinitely more powerful than their giant grandaddy. For this is to be the . . .

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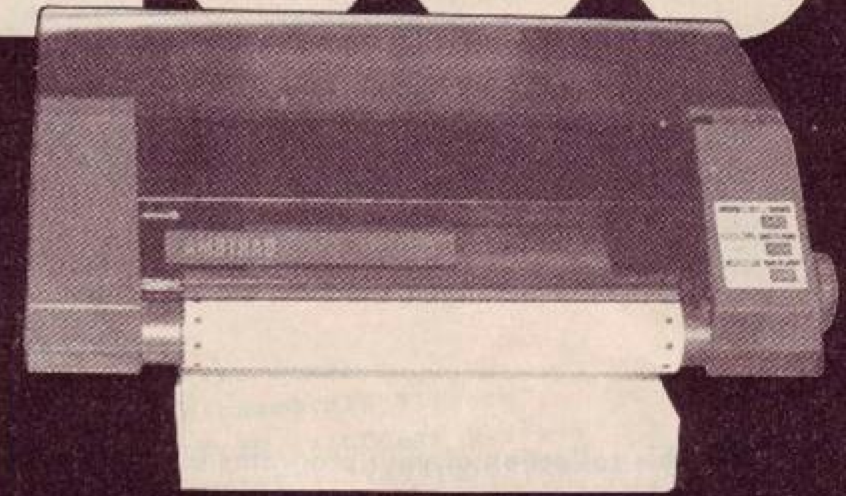
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PLUG-INS

Enter the DMP 2000

We check out Amstrad's new bargain printer



First impressions of the DMP 2000 are similar to lasting impressions – favourable. It's cased in the same dark grey plastic as Amstrad's computers and has a sloping front with tinted perspex lid. Overall result: a sleek, modern appearance.

Before you can start using it you must put on the plug, insert the printer ribbon and plug in the supplied Centronics cable which links the printer to the back of your computer. This gives you time to wonder why it's called the DMP 2000 – maybe it's supposed to be 2000 times as good as the DMP 1 which it replaces. That wouldn't be hard.

Experienced printer users may be puzzled when they try to feed some paper into the back of the machine. It won't go. That's because the designers of the machine twigged that it would involve much less stretching if you could just feed it in from the front – and that's what you do. Envelopes will go as well as paper, because they don't get bent round a roller. Mind you, you still have to crane your neck to see that the top of the paper/envelope has been fed through far enough.

How it compares

The DMP 2000 is currently the cheapest printer around to pack so many features and certainly represents a bargain. However if your budget will stretch a little further there are several other printers to consider which could offer better printout, faster speed and higher reliability – our DMP 2000 showed some signs of poor workmanship, including a badly-adjusted print-head which caused print on the left of the page to come out too light.

The EPSON LX-80 has the Epson name for reliability and can be bought for just over £200 - check out the small ads in this mag. It offers many similar features, but you'll have to pay extra for a tractor-drive to feed continuous stationery.

The SHINWA CPA-80 costs about £200 and is faster than the DMP 2000. It's basic type-face is also, in our view, more pleasing, but it lacks the 'Near Letter Quality' option and is said to be less reliable than an Epson.

Other cheap printers to consider are the CANON 1080A (dot-matrix) and the DAISY STEP 2000 (a daisy-wheel – much higher print quality, but less flexibility and speed).

The printer has a built-in "tractor feed" which means you can if you wish use continous printer paper with holes in the sides and avoid having to keep inserting new sheets. It also has legs which lift it above the desk-top allowing you to place a pile of continuous stationery underneath.

Your first printout will reveal one big plus over the DMP 1 – true descenders. In other words, the bottoms of p's and q's and the like fall below the line not on it. This is the first essential to giving a reasonable-looking printout.

The DMP 2000 is a dot-matrix printer which means the letters are produced by a set of tiny pins in the print-head which stamp against a ribbon in various combinations to produce the shapes required. The advantage of this is that the printer is capable of numerous different type-styles. The disadvantage is that the overall quality is not as high as, say an electric type-writer.

However there is a playoff between speed and quality. If you don't mind the printer taking its time you can get it to give a fairly good quality printout – they call it 'near letter quality' which means you can use it for printing letters if you're a journalist, but not if you're a solicitor. A check on the AA test-bench timed it at an average 18 characters per second in this mode or about two minutes for an A4 page.

If this is too slow for you, you might have to settle for the draft-quality mode which we timed at 58 characters per second. The machine's tech spec actually claims over 100 cps, but this makes no allowance for the time taken to feed the paper after each line. The flexibility of the machine is greatly aided by the provision of 18 DIP switches which allow you to control the state of the printer when it is first switched on – eight international character sets are available together with options to set an automatic skip over perforations in continuous stationery or alter the default typeface. On older dot-matrix printers you used to have to open the casing to access these switches, but the DMP 2000 has them readily available through a gap in the back, a great advantage.

The manual too is good, especially compared to the Double Dutch (or Double Japanese) served up by some manufacturers. However, non-technical users will still find that the easiest way of getting the most out of the machine is to use a good word-processor with it – this should give facilities for switching typefaces automatically.

VERDICT

The arrival of the DMP 2000 is great news. At a price many people can afford (£159.95) it offers an impressive combination of features: acceptable print quality, plenty of flexibility, pleasing design and ease of use.

Certainly by spending another £50 you can get a printer that's faster and produces better printout. But for the money the 2000's almost as good a bargain as the Amstrad computers themselves.

Some of the type-styles available. The total number of combinations is over 100.

This is the standard, draft-quality typeface. Fast but crude.
This is emphasized. Slower but bolder.
This is the 'Mini' typeface.
Here's proportional spacing. The space around the thinner letters has shrunk.
This is described as 'Near Letter Quality'. Depends who you're writing to.
This combines Near Letter Quality with Proportional Spacing.
This is condensed. You can squeeze lots into no space at all.
Unlike double width printing.
Here's standard italics. All the above faces are also available italicised.
And finally underlining, the subscript option, AND the superscript.

AMSTRAD DRUMKIT

This month's collection of your programs includes a superb drum-kit synthesizer plus several mini-listings you can enter in just a few minutes. They're all compatible with the 464, 664 and 6128.

We're extremely impressed by this type-in from Devonian JOHN KENEALLY which turns your machine into a surprisingly sophisticated rhythm unit. It's a doddle to use, allowing you to create three-part rhythms using a wide range of simulated percussion sounds: bass drum, wood block, cowbell, guiro, cymbal, snare-drum, high-hat and four tom-toms.

On screen you can switch between three large grids, each representing one of the Amstrad's three sound channels. Each of the 48 vertical lines in the grid marks a different 'beat' in the 48-beat sequence the program produces. You simply use the arrowed cursor keys to select which sound (if any) is to be played on each beat – the up/down cursor keys select different sounds, while the left/right keys move you onto different beats.

All three channels play simultaneously all the time the program is running, so you can instantly hear the effect of any changes you make. A good idea is to use one channel to establish a solid background rhythm, say by playing the bass drum every other beat. Then the other two channels can be used to add the frills. To show you what can be done, a sophisticated rhythm track starts playing as soon as the program is run.

Pressing other keys allows you to make the rhythm play faster or slower (F or S). And, most importantly, you can also save your completed masterpieces onto tape or disk or load in rhythms saved earlier. So you could build up a library of rhythms ranging from rock and roll to the cha cha. So get tap-tap-typing...

```
10 REM Amstrad Drumkit
20 REM Copyright J. Keneally 1985
30 MODE 2:GOSUB 210:GOSUB 640
40 EVERY itime GOSUB 760
50 imd=0
60 a$="":LOCATE 35,3:PRINT"Beat:";ix:WHILE a$=
"":a$=INKEY$
70 LOCATE 13+ix,16-irythm(ix,ichan)
80 PRINT CHR$(143+imd);:imd=(imd+1) AND 1
90 WEND
100 a$=UPPER$(a$):IF a$="S" OR a$="F" THEN GOS
UB 810:GOTO 60
110 IF a$="C" THEN GOSUB 830:GOTO 60
120 IF a$="L" THEN GOSUB 850:GOTO 60
130 IF a$="W" THEN GOSUB 920:GOTO 60
140 LOCATE 13+ix,16-irythm(ix,ichan)
150 i=ASC(a$):PRINT CHR$(159+16*(i=243 OR (i=2
42)));:
160 i1=irythm(ix,ichan)
170 irythm(ix,ichan)=i1-(i=241)*(i1>0)+(i=240)
*(i1<11)
180 ix=ix+(i=243)*(ix<47)-(i=242)*(ix>0)
190 GOTO 60
200 REM
210 REM Initialise
220 DEFINT i:DIM irythm(47,3),itone(11),ienv(1
1),ient(11),noise(11),name$(11)
```

```
230 RESTORE 240
240 DATA 0,1,0,15,Wood Block
250 DATA 18,5,3,13,Guiro
260 DATA 80,3,0,0,Cowbell
270 DATA 0,4,0,2,Hi Hat
280 DATA 150,6,4,1,Cymbal
290 DATA 200,3,1,13,Snare
300 DATA 480,1,2,10,Tom 4
310 DATA 375,1,2,15,Tom 3
320 DATA 325,1,2,6,Tom 2
330 DATA 240,1,2,3,Tom 1
340 DATA 870,3,1,31,Bass Drum
350 FOR i=1 TO 11
360 READ itone(i),ienv(i),ient(i),noise(i),name$(i)
370 NEXT i
380 FOR i=0 TO 47:READ irythm(i,0):NEXT
390 DATA 10,10,6,6,11,0,11,0,5,0,6,5,11,0,11,4
400 DATA 10,10,6,6,11,0,11,0,5,0,6,5,11,0,11,4
410 DATA 10,10,6,6,11,0,11,0,5,0,6,5,11,0,11,4
420 irythm(5,1)=1:irythm(16,1)=2:irythm(34,1)=3:irythm(36,1)=3
430 irythm(0,1)=3:FOR i=44 TO 47:irythm(i,1)=3:NEXT
440 irythm(2,2)=1:irythm(19,2)=1:irythm(20,2)=1
450 itime=6:ichan=0:ix=0
460 ind=0
470 ENT 1,1,-100,1,5,25,3
480 ENT -2,1,-75,1,4,25,3
490 ENT -3,1,4,2,1,-8,2,1,4,2
500 ENT -4,4,4,1,4,-4,1
510 ENV 1,1,15,2,5,-3,4
520 ENV 2,1,15,1,15,-1,2
530 ENV 3,1,15,1,4,-2,2,7,-1,4
540 ENV 4,7,2,1,14,-1,4
550 ENV 5,1,15,1,15,-1,8
560 ENV 6,2,7,1,1,0,20,14,-1,10
570 LOCATE 13,18:PRINT"S,F = Slow/Fast. C = Channel. L=Load. W=save"
580 LOCATE 23,21:PRINT STRING$(21,143)
590 LOCATE 23,25:PRINT STRING$(21,143)
600 FOR i=1 TO 3:LOCATE 22,21+i:PRINT CHR$(143);TAB(44);CHR$(143):NEXT i
610 LOCATE 26,23:PRINT"AMSTRAD DRUMKIT"
620 RETURN
630 REM
640 REM Write frame
650 ifs=16:name$(0)="Silence"
660 FOR i=0 TO 11:LOCATE 2,ifs-i
670 PRINT name$(i);TAB(13);STRING$(48,159)
680 NEXT i
690 FOR i=0 TO 47:LOCATE 13+i,ifs-irythm(i,ichan)
700 PRINT CHR$(143);:NEXT i
710 PLOT 95,398-16*ifs:DRAWR 386,0
720 DRAWR 0,194:DRAWR -386,0:DRAWR 0,-194
730 LOCATE 20,3:PRINT"Channel No.";ichan
740 RETURN
750 REM
760 REM Play rythm
770 FOR iz1=0 TO 2
780 iz=irythm(ind,iz1):IF iz<>0 THEN SOUND 129+iz1,itone(iz),1000,0,ienv(iz),ient(iz),noise(iz)
790 NEXT
800 ind=(ind+1) MOD 48:RETURN
810 IF a$="S"  THEN itime=itime+1 ELSE itime=itime+(itime>1)
820 EVERY itime GOSUB 760:RETURN
830 ichan=(ichan+1) MOD 3:GOSUB 640:ix=0:RETURN
840 REM
850 REM Load
860 GOSUB 970
870 CLS#1:PRINT#1,"Loading."
880 OPENIN"!rythm"
890 FOR i=0 TO 47:INPUT #9,irythm(i,0),irythm(i,1),irythm(i,2)
900 NEXT i:CLOSEIN:EVERY itime GOSUB 760
910 CLS#1:GOSUB 640:ix=0:RETURN
920 REM Save
930 GOSUB 970:OPENOUT"!rythm"
940 CLS#1:PRINT#1,"Saving."
950 FOR i=0 TO 47:FOR i1=0 TO 2:PRINT #9,irythm(i,i1):NEXT i1:NEXT i
960 CLOSEOUT:CLS#1:EVERY itime GOSUB 760:RETURN
970 i=REMAIN(0):WINDOW#1,65,80,10,15
980 PRINT#1,"Load tape,":PRINT#1,"press a key."
990 WHILE INKEY$<>"":WEND:WHILE INKEY$="":WEND
1000 RETURN
```

PSYCHEDELIC PLOT

Also from John Keneally comes an admirably short, yet pleasing graphics prog, which shows what certain 3D mathematical functions look like when they're plotted in 2D, using colour to represent the third dimension.

After running the program as it is (and then pressing Esc to break out of it) you could try changing line 30 to one of the following:

z=sin(x)*sin(y)
z=sin(y)/y*sin(x)
z=sin(x*x+y*y)

Or, if you know how to, you can try any other such function. Not bad for a ten line program.

```
10 REM 2D Function plots
20 FOR i=0 TO 13:INK i,2*i:NEXT:GOTO 40
30 z=SIN(ABS(y*(1+ABS(x))/10)^3+4*x*x):RETURN
40 xscale=10:yscale=10:zscale=0.2:
50 MODE 0:PLOT 116,302,13:DRAWR 408,0:DRAWR 0,-204:DRAWR -408,0:DRAWR
0,204
60 ORIGIN 320,200,120,520,300,100
70 x1=-200:FOR x=-1*xscale TO 1*xscale STEP 0.02*xscale:y1=-100:FOR y=
-1*yscale TO 1*yscale STEP 0.02*yscale
80 GOSUB 30:i=INT(z/zscale)+7:i=MAX(0,i):i=MIN(13,i)
90 PLOT x1,y1,i:y1=y1+2:NEXT:x1=x1+4:NEXT
100 GOTO 100
```

DISK MENU

This little program for disk-drive owners allows you to set up a master menu for each disk which displays all the programs on it. Any individual program can then be run by simply typing its number (from 1 to 9).

To customise the listing for one of your disks, you must change line 20 to include the descriptions and file names of your disk programs. Then alter the '6' in line 30 to match the number of programs on the disk.

After you've saved the finished program using SAVE "DISK", you can use it each time you use the disk by typing RUN"DISK" <Enter>. Could make life a lot easier for non-computer literate members of the family.

Thanks to Mike Singleton from Preston.

```
10 BORDER 0:INK 0,24:INK 1,1:PEN 0:PAPER 1:MODE 1:CLS:LOCATE 19,2:PRIN
T"GAMES";
20 DATA Roland on the Ropes,ROLROPES.BAS,Roland in Time,ROINTIME.BAS,L
ocomotion,LOCOMOTI.BAS,Chiller,CHILLER.BAS,Psychedelia,PSY.BAS,Formula
 One Simulation,FORMULA1.BAS
30 MENU%=6:DIM PROG$(MENU%)
40 RESTORE 20:FOR X=1 TO MENU%:READ X$:READ PROG$(X):LOCATE 5,4+X*2:PR
INT X;" "; X$;:NEXT X
50 IN$=INKEY$:IF IN$="" THEN 50
60 IF VAL(IN$) < 1 OR VAL(IN$) > MENU% THEN 50
70 CLS:RUN PROG$(VAL(IN$))
80 RUN
```



GRAPHIC PATTERNS

Here's another pleasing mini-listing to demonstrate Arnold's graphic capability. It produces a series of graphic patterns which gradually increase in complexity. Different patterns every time you run it! When you want to see a new pattern, just press any key.

Our thanks, and a tenner, to 14-year-old Martin Scarland from East Grinstead, Sussex.

```
10 MODE 2
20 CLG
30 S%=RND *5+1
40 T%=RND *5+1
50 ORIGIN 320,200
60 FOR R=0 TO 10000 STEP PI/25
70 X%=100*COS(R)
80 MOVE X%,X%
90 DRAW 200*COS(R/S%),200*SIN(R/T%),3
100 IF INKEY$<>"" THEN 20
110 NEXT
120 GOTO 20
```

REWARD

If you can program why not put your mind to contributing to these pages? Major listings could earn you anything from £50 to £100, while each mini-listing we print earns the author a tenner. (Roughly speaking a mini-listing *is one that's no more than 20 lines* long. A major listing can be any length, but it has to very good, offering something that will be of major use/interest to a majority of Amstrad owners.)

Please note that you may only submit programs which are 100 per cent your original work and which haven't been submitted (or printed) elsewhere.

You should submit your program on tape or disk, accompanied by a print-out or neatly written copy of the listing. If you want your program returned you must also include a suitable stamped, self-addressed envelope or jiffy bag.

Send it all to:
Type-ins Editor
Amstrad Action
Somerton
Somerset
TA11 7PS

COMPETITION

You've had to wait a long time to find out if you've won a prize in any of the competitons from Issues 3 & 4. Well, the suspense is over: here, at last, are the lists.

All the comps were pretty straightforward and most people managed correct, or nearly correct entries. Some of you, though, did have a little trouble with the seventh of the evil nasty questions from the *Cauldron* comp – What animal in *Macbeth* whines three times in the witches' chant? We got some very odd answers for this one. Cats, dogs, budgerigars – a veritable menagerie was offered. The answer, in case you're ever asked the question again, is a 'hedge-pig'. OK?

The only other problem is that *Beach Head 2* is still not quite ready for release. So if you've won it, please be patient. You shouldn't have long to wait.

Beach Head 2

M.K Hussain, London; **M J Bedwell**, Ipswich; **Barrington**, Liverpool; **Peter Corsne**, Clackmannan; **Alex Callum**, Twickenham; **Jason Bourne**, Newquay; **R S Wylie**, Thurso; **Brian Privett** London; **J C Calderbank**, Rochester; **Steven Whitlam**, Norwich; **M J Sargent**, Lydney, Glos; **Colin Morrison**, Perth; **Matthew Collis**, Sutton Coldfield; **Tim Earwaker**, Basingstoke; **Mr G Nock**, 53 Leabank Road, Dudley; **David Baxter**, Carluke; **Paul Dowman**, Scunthorpe; **C Betts**, Southampton; **Mr M J Bensley**, North Walsham, Norfolk; **Ciaran Lewis**, Dalkey, Ireland; **Ben Leadbetter**, Blandford, Dorset; **Neil Woodhouse**, Stockport; **Kevin Seymour**, Heathfield, East Sussex; **S Protheroe**, Dudley; **A Gatward**, Brixham, Devon; **Mr R Denton**, Torquay; **E White**, Kirkby, Liverpool; **Stuart Mansfield**, Windsor; **J Hamilton**, Aylesbury; **David Millar**, Johnstone, Renfrewshire

Mastertronic

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M P Gallagher, Hereford;

Cauldron

TROPHY WINNER
Haydn Davies, Cobham
OTHER WINNERS
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Willow Pattern.

S J Lee, Huntingdon, Cambs; **M Ward**, Scunthorpe; **Adrian Carnie**, Dalkeith, Mid Lothian; **Andrew Crawford**, Tiverton, Devon; **Mr P N Wood**, Newbury, Berks; **N P Field**, Langport, Somerset; **T J Gentle**, Hitchin, Herts; **R F Hemmings**, Swindon, Wilts; **David Cooper**, Wolverhampton; **Neil Sharp**, Onchan, Isle of Man; **S Thorpe**, Huddersfield; **Peter Murphy**, Dunfermline, Fife; **R S Thomson**, Bathgate; **Evan Welsh**, Leven, Fife; **Mr R F Keeley**, Maidenhead, Berks; **David Litherland**, Bolton, Greater Manchester; **Adam Berry**, Norwich; **Craig Headford**, Bristol; **A S Kerr**, Newton Abbot, South Devon; **N Scott**, Livingstone, West Lothian; **William Freeland**, Dalkeith, Mid-Lothian; **Gary Fitzjohn**, Bushey, Herts; **Paul Sutcliffe**, Shaftesbury, Dorset; **Kosniowski**, Martock, Somerset;
Ben Leadbetter, Blandford, Dorset; **V Hinman**, Pinner, Middlesex
Steve Bradwell, Gredstedbro, Denmark; **M Hoe**, Basingstoke; **Paul Walton**, Whitley Bay

Lord of the Rings

S Waldie, Swansea; **John Wright**, Selston, Notts; **Nick White**, Plymouth; **Miss J M Bould**, Shrewsbury; **Noelle Schwartz**, Ardingly, West Sussex; **Mrs L Smith**, Huddersfield; **Joe Smith**, Wisbech; **Matthew Risker**, Willenhall, West Mids; **Miss R McEvan**, Bradford; **Sarah Barnes**, Plymouth; **A Loucaides**, Meopham, Kent; **Mr I F Perry**, Halesowen, West Midlands; **T Broadley**, Timperley, Cheshire; **Martin Empson**, Birmingham; **Mr P Whittingham**, Crosby, Merseyside; **P Hopkinson**, Wareham, Dorset; **Martin Harris**, Stanmore, Middlesex; **M T Todd**, Redcar, Cleveland; **Eric Forman**, Woodford Green, Essex; **M Armer**, Carnforth; **Nicola Matthews**, Nuneaton; **Neil Fletcher**, Aintree; **Marc Lawler**, London; **Darren M Neil**, Newcastle Upon Tyne; **Mark Martin**, Prescot, Merseyside; **David Covey**, Haywards Heath; **Mark Kane**, Wokingham; **Jane Gubb**, Bristol; **J J Price**, Hemel Hempstead; **Tom Scutt**, Bognor Regis

Mindshadow

Ian Ridley, Liverpool; **James Miller**, London; **A Greenaway**, London; **Martin Hatton**, Morpeth, Northumberland; **Brian Edmunds**, Northampton; **Mr Robert Kerr**, Glasgow; **Nick Allen**, Bridgnorth, Shropshire; **Martin Walker**, Leeds; **Mr S Danks**, Walsall, West Midlands; **Anon**, Plymouth; **P G Worrall**, Ayr, Scotland; **Stephen Thomas**, Falmouth; **Mr J Pacitti**, Edinburgh; **Mr L Walker**, Liverpool; **Tim Earwaker**, Basingstoke; **David Tomlinson**, Worksop, Notts; **Kurt James**, Lymm, Cheshire; **Christina Smith**, Dyfed, S Wales; **Miss L Steel**, Ulverston, Cumbria; **Angela Hackney**, Renfrewshire, Scotland; **Stephen Merrett**, Chichester; **A J Wilcox**, Esher, Surrey; **Phil Smith**, Greenford, Middlesex; **G J Bostock**, Urmston, Nr Manchester; **Barry Duell**, Newcastle-Upon-Tyne; **Mr E T Stevens**, Matlock, Derbyshire; **Mr D Clayton**, Rochford, Essex; **Emmet Masterson**, Sidcup, Kent; **Richard Geodhead**, Warrington, Cheshire; **Jamie Wilson**, Benfleet Essex; **C A Sharp**, Sheffield; **Nick Turner**, Bridgnorth, Shropshire; **Alex Monsey**, Cowley, Middlesex; **J T Gledhill**, Sutton Coldfield; **W Learoyd**, Leeds; **N Fleet**, Lincoln; **Carl Ayscough**, Mexborough, South Yorkshire; **Paul Seath**, Glenrothes, Fife; **Charles H M Joynson**, Bradford; **Andrew Raeburn**, Welwyn Garden City, Herts; **George Reaves**, Bradford; **Colin Mee**, Leeds; **Michael Wong**, Sale, Cheshire; **Russell Wareham**, Poole, Dorset;, **J C Calderbank**, Rochester, Kent; **Paul Breslin**, Londonderry, N.I.; **Matthew Dixon**, Gravesend, Kent; **Robert McGlenaghan**, Kirkby, Liverpool; **Mr M Hoe**, Basingstoke, Hants; **Richard P Hancock**, Spridlington, Nr Lincoln; **Gordon Briffett**, Maesbury, Shropshire; **Alan Hanson**, Sittingbourne, Kent; **Michael J Hart**, Birmingham; **John Buck**, Whitby, North Yorkshire; **Roddy Dunlop**, Glasgow; **David Litherland**, Bolton, Greater Manchester; **Alex Stein**, Sherborne, Dorset; **Mr Paul Barned**, Hove, East Sussex; **Stephen Doyle**, Walsall, West Mids; **D Roofe**, Wisbech, Cambs; **R A Evans**, Bridgend, Mid Glamorgan; **Paul Walton**, Tyne & Wear; **B Stuart Bruce**, Cleator, Cumbria; **S J Moore**, Tunbridge Wells, Kent; **Ben Middleton**, Teignmouth, Devon; **Richard Harrison**, Cardiff; **ames Lennox**, Bangor, Co Down; **Neil Sharp**, Onchan, Isle of Man; **Craig Robinson**, Mossley, Ashton-Under-Lyne; **Phil Jones**, Handsworth, Birmingham; **Nicholas S Kientsch**, Cambridge; **Paul McGlinchey**, Derby; **Andrew Willis**, Earls Barton, Northants; **Robin Pleasants**, Cardiff

WINNERS

Run for Gold/Rally Driver

These corking Hill MacGibbon games could be your only chance to win an olympic medal, break the world 1500m record and take part in a gruelling car rally. 25 pairs must be won.

Run for Gold **is just about the only good sports game you can play without breaking either your joystick or your arm. Or both. It's also a game of great excitement and not a little skill.**

Rally Driver **is a mud-spattered burn-up around some pretty dangerous country roads. Not least of the hazards are those silly cows mooing around on the highway.**

The Questions

1. Who was the first man to run a four minute mile?
a) Alf Tupper
b) Roger Bannister
c) Christopher Brasher

2. Who was the last British man to win the Olympic 800m?
a) Steve Ovett
b) Steve Cram
c) Steve McQueen

3. Which car won the 1985 RAC/Lombard Rally?
a) Audi Quattro
b) Lancia
c) Mini Clubman

Contraption Caption

Audiogenic's beautiful platform game can be won by 50 readers of taste, discrimination and an uproarious sense of humour

Here's a nice little earner for 50 people. All you have to do is write a witty – funny, amusing, etc. – caption for the screen shot below. What's the prof saying?

Search me, but if you come up with something that makes us laugh here in the office you could win a copy of the entertaining platform game. And those graphics are really very pretty indeed.

Just write the poor prof's words on a postcard or the back of an envelope, clearly marked *Caption Comp*, and send it to us.



Warning
Separate entries are required for the two parts of this competition. Joint entries will be binned forthwith.

Who Dares Wins

Competition Entries
All three competitions have the same closing date: Thursday 13th March. Remember to make separate entries for all of them, including the two parts of the Alligata comp. Entries must be on a postcard or the back of an envelope. Send them to: *Amstrad Action, The Old Barn, Somerton, Somerset TA11 7PS.*

Part 1
And if you dare to enter this snappy Alligata competition you could be one of 25 winners of the all-action shoot-em-up *Who Dares Wins II*. Rescue prisoners and blast your way through eight enemy outposts. Take out the 'copters, dodge the grenades, dive for cover in that fox-hole! It's stirring stuff – so stirring that it's an AA Rave this month.

Part 2
And that's not all. In an act of almost unbelievable bounty, Alligata are offering five disc-drive owners the chance to lay their hands on copies of their forthcoming blockbuster *Meltdown*. Set on the moon, the game casts you in the role of only surviving human. You have to get to the crazy computer and switch it off before meltdown melts you down. The game will have an amazing 190 rooms, three major game tasks and 18 sub-tasks.

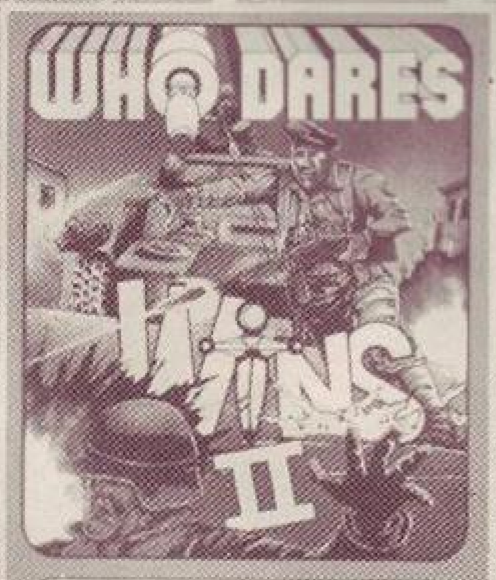
What is to be done

Part 1
If you want to win a copy of *Who Dares Wins II*, just cast an experienced gamester's eye over the list of factors involved in buying a new game. You have to put them in order of importance. 25 people who get the same order as AA will win copies of the game. Remember to put the quality you think *most* important at the top of the list – if you think Price is the most important factor then it should be number 1 on your list.

Put your answers on a postcard or the back of an envelope, marked *WDW 1*.

Part 2
If you're itching to get a load of *Meltdown* all you must do is dream up an appropriate name for a new computer language. Because one of the many tasks you face in the game is to program a computer that doesn't yet have a language. Alligata have considered *Hackspeak* – can you do better? Please – no more than two or three words.

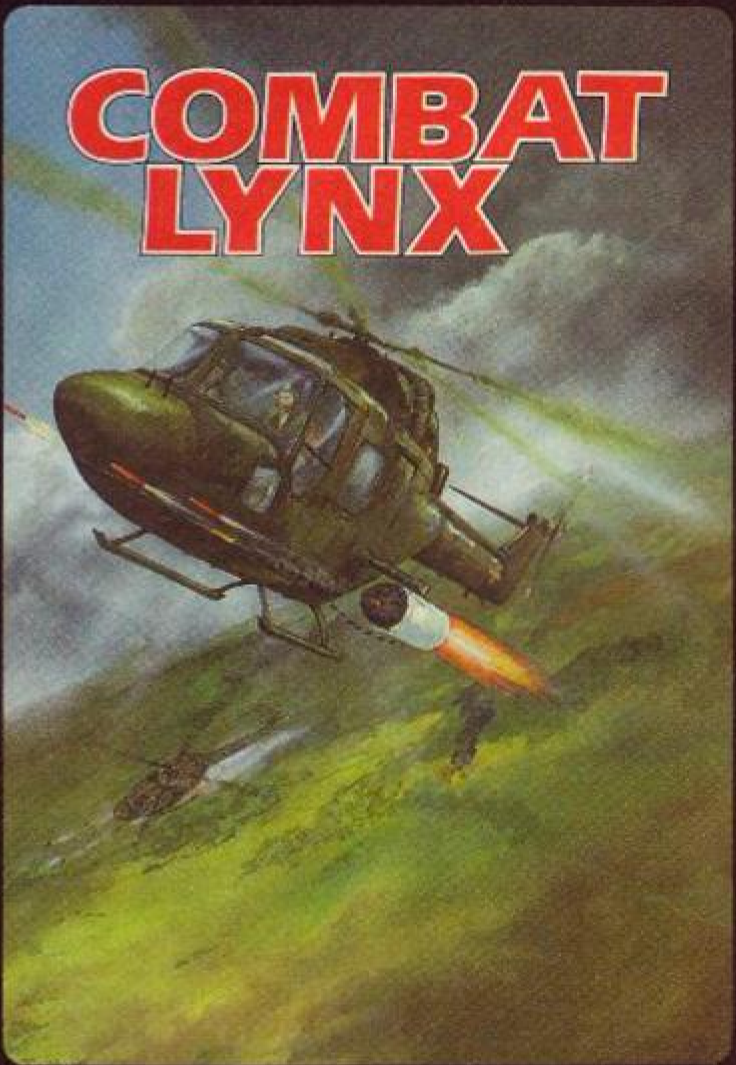
Entries on a postcard or the back of an envelope, clearly marked *WDW 2*.



The game factors

Price
Grab Factor
Sonics
Staying Power
Packaging
Graphics
Originality

DURELL



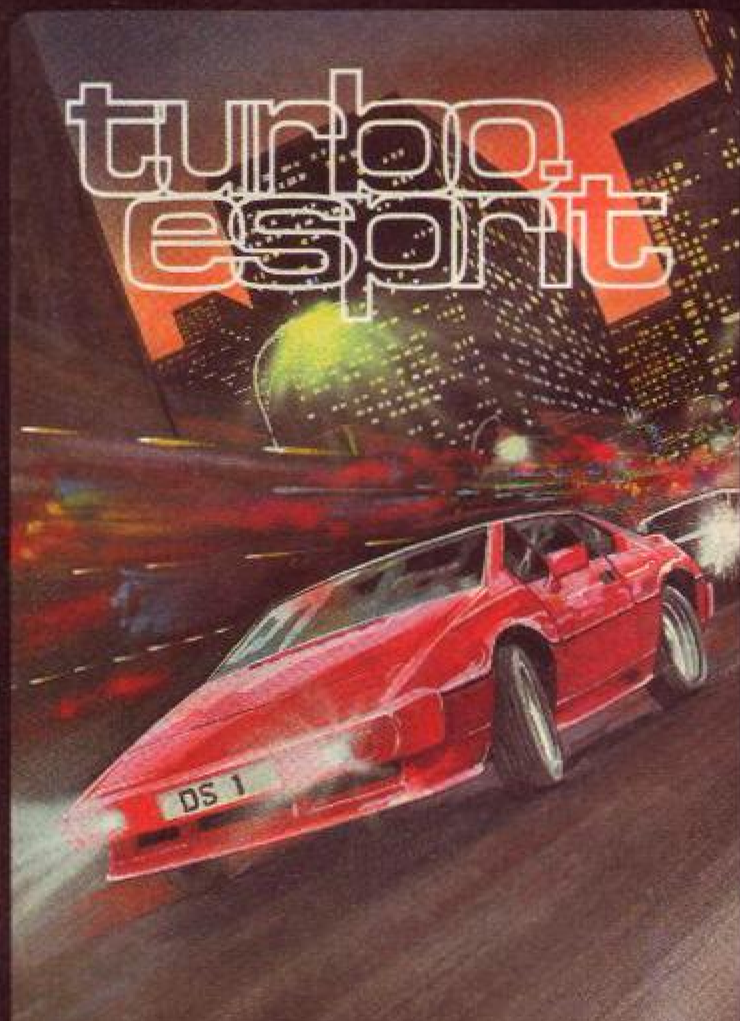
COMBAT LYNX (Air-to-ground Battle Simulation)

Spectrum 48k	£8.95
Commodore 64	£8.95
Amstrad 464/6128	£8.95
BBC/Electron	£8.95

"Combat Lynx is both simulation and shoot-em-up games in one. The 3D effect created by using contour line graphics tends to give it a more technical feel, so more like a simulation, but on the other hand there are lots of jets and enemy helicopters whizzing around and ground forces shooting at you which gives the game its instant playability appeal. Once you get the hang of coping with everything, it's possible to play a game of high strategy which involves not only arcade skills but those of forward planning. For people who enjoy strategy type games, Combat Lynx should provide hours of fun, while for those who prefer something instant and fast - choose skill level 4 and hang onto your hats! Generally the graphics are most impressive, with a few attribute problems when objects are about to become hidden, but these are minor in what is otherwise an engaging and challenging game."







TURBO ESPRIT (3D Simulation Car Chase)

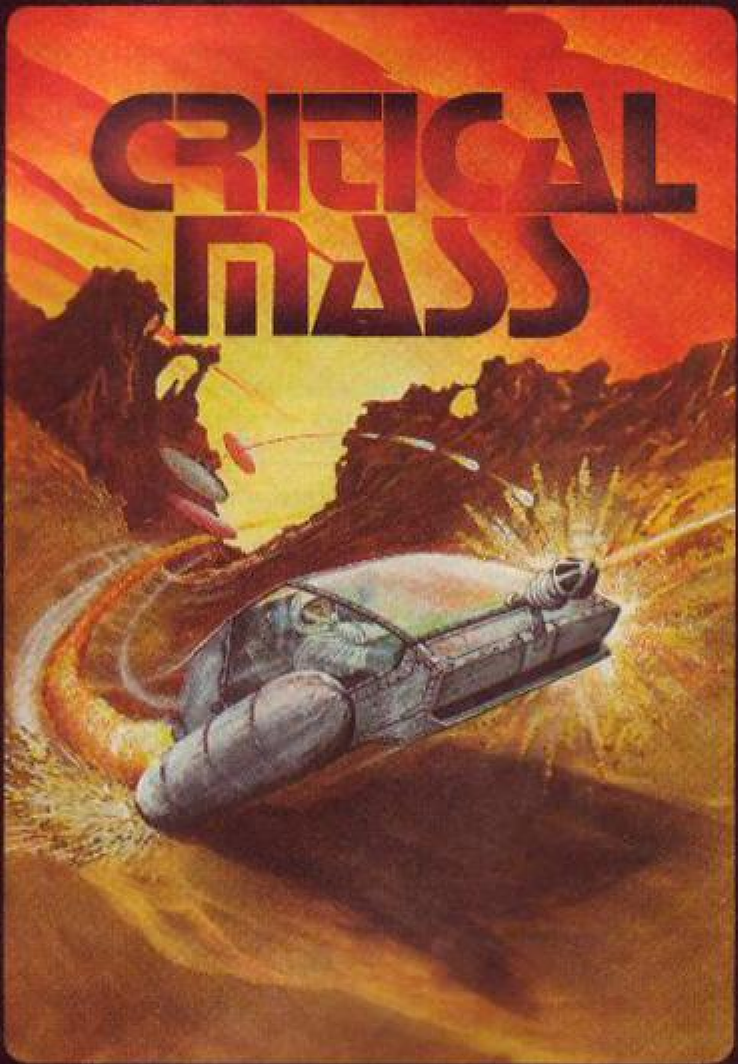
Spectrum 48k	£8.95
Commodore 64	£8.95
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You are a special agent equipped with a Lotus Turbo Esprit. An international ring of drug smugglers are about to make a huge delivery of heroin, and must be stopped at all costs. The drugs are stored at a number of houses in the city, and will be taken by cars to an armoured van which will be cruising around the centre. A raid on the van before completion of the delivery would leave some of the drugs in circulation. Similarly a raid on any of the houses would alert them to your squad's activities. You must therefore try and pick-off the cars one by one before they make their drop, and then try to stop the van before it escapes. The delivery cars will be backed-up by 'hit' squads - so watch out!

(Developed with the support of Lotus Cars Ltd)







CRITICAL MASS (Arcade)

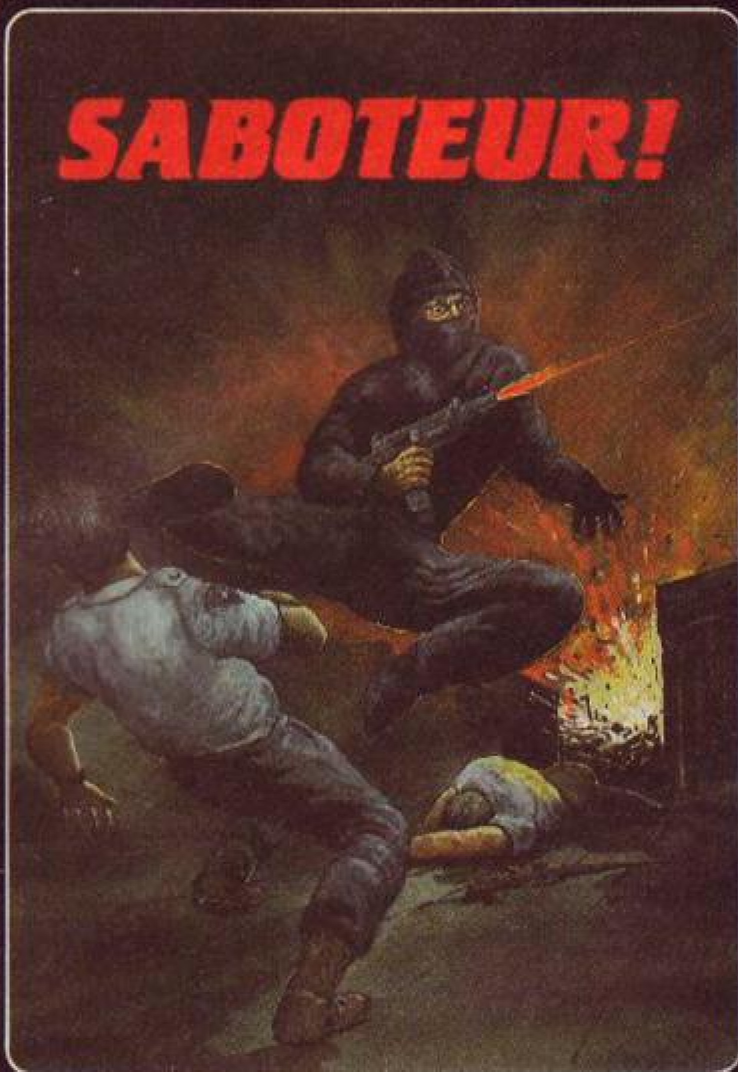
Spectrum 48k	£8.95
Commodore 64	£8.95
Amstrad 464/6128	£8.95

An outlying system of the Terra Federation has set up an advanced anti-matter conversion plant on a centrally positioned asteroid to supply the local colonists with energy. A surprise attack by alien forces has successfully overcome the asteroid's defences and the aliens are now threatening to self-destruct the power plant unless the colonists offer an unconditional surrender. The self-destruction process would effectively turn the power plant into a massive black hole that would wipe out the entire planetary system along with a number of nearby stars. Unconditional surrender offers an equally horrific prospect. Your mission is to infiltrate the enemy position and disable the anti-matter plant before the aliens achieve CRITICAL MASS.

"This is the biz!......The graphics and playability of this game are superb, making it well worth the money."







SABOTEUR (Martial Arts Arcade Adventure)

Spectrum 48k	£8.95
Amstrad 464/6128	£8.95
Commodore 64	£8.95

You are a highly skilled mercenary trained in the martial arts. You are employed to infiltrate a central security building which is disguised as a warehouse. You must steal a disk that contains the names of all the rebel leaders before its information is sent to the outlying security stations. You are working against the clock, both in getting to the disk, and in making your escape. You must enter the building from the sea by rubber dinghy, and will then only be able to leave by the helicopter on the roof. You will have to find your way around the warehouse, making use of the guards' own weapon supplies in your struggle through overwhelming odds.

"Saboteur is without a doubt one of the best arcade games I've seen for a long time and a welcome departure from the plethora of licenced/endorsed product that the industry seems to currently favour. Recommended."





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Special

PSS

Pete Connor gets sent to Coventry to find out what the Wargamers are doing with some *very* interesting French software.



Gary Mays (left) and Richard Cockayne pose with the Porsche.

Now here's a funny thing – and not many people know this – PSS stands for *Personal Software Services.* Why PSS, you might well wonder. Ask Gary Mays, co-founder and partner in the company, and he'll look rather pained, heave a sigh and explain that the name 'was our first and biggest mistake'. In mitigation he pleads that 'we Letraseted our first publicity ourselves. We just seemed to have more Ps and Ss than anything else.'

Well, they seem to have got over the name. PSS is now synonomous for many people with high-quality wargames – *Battle of Midway, Battle of Britain, Theatre Europe.* Games which give you the best of strategy without the agony of spending five days on manouevres.

But PSS are more than just the people responsible for the Wargames series. They're about to unleash on the Amstrad-owning public the long-awaited (more of that later) *Swords and Sorcery,* the Dungeons and Dragons-inspired game that reaches the parts other games don't get to.

And that's not all. They're also the first software house to bring over to Britain the best in French software. 'So what?', the Francophobes cry. Well, just get a load of the games previewed over the page – we think they're going to be real corkers, with or without a Channel road tunnel.

PSS began in November 1981 when two recent Management Studies graduates from Warwick University – Gary Mays and Richard Cockayne – walked into W.H. Smith's in Coventry and noticed on the shelves a primitive form of computer magazine life. In the back of this publication were adverts for mail-order computer games. The two young men had the same brilliant idea, although neither of them at that time could tell a bit from a byte. They advertised for programmers, and within two months had 15 programs available. While they were waiting for them they sold T-shirts to ease the traditional cash-flow problems of young businesses. Their first 'best-seller' was a utility for the ZX 81 called *Q Save.* It sold 2,000 copies.

But those were the good old days, when a front room wasn't a front room unless someone was running a software house from behind the sofa. Soon, the big-time operators moved in. The little man with his mail-order games couldn't break in to the retail side. Many companies just gave up the ghost.

But not PSS. They survived, says Gary, because 'we weren't programmers. We were more business-oriented, and we knew what to do.' Now PSS employs eight people full-time: three on the business side and five programmers. There's a lot of hot stuff to come from them in '86.

Gary on games: **'My all-time favourites are *Fort Apocalypse* and *Lunar Jetman* – that was really great once you got the technique.'**

'I suppose the Gargoyle stuff has impressed me most recently. But most games at the moment don't really impress me at all. The trend is very graphics-oriented. People forget gameplay. But you can go so far and no further with graphics.'

On the Amstrad: **'I think it will replace the Spectrum this year as the most popular machine.'**

On the PSS set-up: **'Nobody has a fixed job. If it comes down to it, we'll all lend a hand at anything.'**

On certain software houses: **'They're just teams of marketing people.'**

On market segmentation: **'We've got our own niche in the market, and that's how we've done well.'**

The *Wargames* series

The idea for a series of strategy games came from PSS's senior programmer, Alan Steele. He's a man, says Gary, 'who's been playing war games since he was six.' He's now 36, so he ought to know what he's doing.

The first one was *Battle of Midway,* back in late 1984. Gary describes it 'a bit of an each way bet'. It seems to have paid off – it's sold 45,000 copies in the 15 months of its existence.

The idea for a game usually comes from Gary. A discussion follows in which it becomes clear whether or not it is feasible to put it on to computer. If the idea gets the go ahead the research is done, partly by the programmers and partly by an associate in London.

So far the Wargames series has stimulated its fair share of controversy – witness the letters in Amstrad Action when *Battle of Britain* was released. Some people think the whole idea of war games is obnoxious, others that they should not deal with recent or contemporary events. The release of *Theatre Europe,* which deals with superpower rivalry and the threat of nuclear war, was not calculated to dampen public interest.

But Gary Mays is vigorous in his defence of the games: 'Some people will always think they're distasteful', he says, 'but personally I don't understand why a TV series or a comic or a film is acceptable when a game dealing with a conflict is not.' He then goes on to the offfensive: 'I find the concept of a game like *Rambo* much more distasteful than what we do. I think it's potentially much more disturbing.'

In fact, Gary can point to *Theatre Europe* as a game which could hardly have been played in a spirit of mindless fun. 'It was an attempt to make people think a bit more', he says. In the course of the game's developement it certainly made a few people at PSS think. Gary himself began as a staunch supporter of CND. But now, he says, 'I'm not sure any more. I can see both sides of the argument'.

The next releases in the series will not pose such weighty

moral questions for most players. *Bismarck*, scheduled for release in April, will allow the player to take either the German or the British side in the naval contest that followed the German launch of the super-warship. Success for the Germans means breaking out of the Baltic and into the North Sea; for the British, finding and then sinking the Bismarck. In this game, says Gary, 'it will be difficult to tell arcade from strategy – it will take over where *Beach Head* left off.'

Before that, in March, *Tobruk* will appear on the Amstrad. The game takes its scenario from the North African campaign of the Second World War. Players can control either the British Eighth Army of Montgomery or Rommel's Afrika Korps. The titanic struggle between the two great strategists should make for some engrossing gameplay.

Swords and Sorcery

A game that's been advertised for well over a year now and which, at time of writing, is still not *quite* ready on the Amstrad. The long delay, according to Gary Mays, is because PSS 'bit off more than we could chew' with the complex developement system involved. 'The crux of the game is the Midas system, and that's what took the time.'

But PSS are 'very pleased' with the result. They think they've come up wiht something completely fresh. So fresh and different, in fact, that Richard Cockayne says that 'people haven't yet been able to appreciate the depth of the game.'

Mike Simpson is the programmer responsible for *S&S*. Mike's aDungeonmaster, so don't mess with him. But the role-playing board game *Dungeons and Dragon* can't be translated to computer, says Mike, because of the 'interaction with other people'.

The aim of the game, says Mike, is to 'develop your character and have fun'. Developing your character doesn't necessarily mean trying to become the nicest person in the world, although you could do that if you wanted. Power is what it's really about; tricking, thrashing or even befriending people as you try to become top dog. There are 20 different character types to contend with, and PSS guarantee that no two games will be the same.

When you've completed *S & S* you'll be able to save your player to tape and use him in the follow-up, due to appear later this year. PSS also have add-on modules for the original game and a book – *The Advanced Player's Guide* – to help you get more out of it.

When the disc version appears, it should be pretty special. It will contain the first of the modules as well as extra scenery and characters. But first, like everybody else, PSS have got to catch their discs.

The French are coming!

PSS have already released one game from the French company Ere Informatique – the very good pinball game *Macadam Bumper*. But the stuff they've got lined up this year knocks spots off that, and off most English stuff too. Amstrad is the market leader now in France – having deposed the poor Oric – so it really is about time they came up with something special. We think that's just what they've done with the three games previewed here. PSS hope to have the English versions available very soon indeed.

Eden Blues

The nightmare scenario of this graphically brilliant arcade adventure doesn't give much away. All you know is that you wake up in prison cell 412, the only survivor. The robots are the new masters and the prison is their headquarters. Why have you been spared?

You revolt violently against your circumstances, smashing down the cell door with a few well-aimed kicks. Outside, the sinister robots are patrolling. Your only escape from them is to enter another cell.

And then, as nightfalls, you hear a strange and plaintive cry. It gives you a reason to live, a reason to fight. It's the voice of a woman...

And that's your lot – you're on your own from there. Strength, courage and stamina all have to be maintained as you dodge the nasty robots and seek a woman and a way out.

The most noticeable thing about the game initially is again the graphics, which are packed full of atmosphere even though they are quite bare. The impression of a futuristic prison and the sort of despair an inmate would feel is well conveyed.

The soundtrack is the opposite. It won't fill you with fear but will get your feet tapping along despite your desperate situation. Your convict character's behaviour may also bring a smile to the face as he walks around, beautifully animated and at two different paces. He kicks down doors with vicious stabs of his foot and is delightfully expressive when he walks nose first into a wall or finally runs out of energy.

The arcade adventure element isn't as strong as in *Crafton and Xunk* and the game becomes more one of exploration and of using resources efficiently to stay alive.

There are three powers to allocate and control: strength, courage and stamina (life, heart, vitality or whichever translation of *vitalite* you prefer). Strength is used up by walking, kicking doors and bumping into walls, courage by having eye to eye battles with robot guards and stamina by time and robots.





Patrick Dublanchet and Catherine Vagnon, the dynamic French duo responsible for *Eden Blues*.

The robots are the main hazard in the game and either rapidly drain your stamina when in the same room or kill on contact. They can be destroyed by eyeballing them with enough courage but either way they prove very weakening. Each power can be built up with the the right nourishment but finding it is the difficult part.

Another nice touch of the game is the passage of time through day and night. At night if you're out in the open security robots will quickly kill you off but shelter can be taken in cells where a quick kip in a bunk will conserve energy until the sun comes up again.

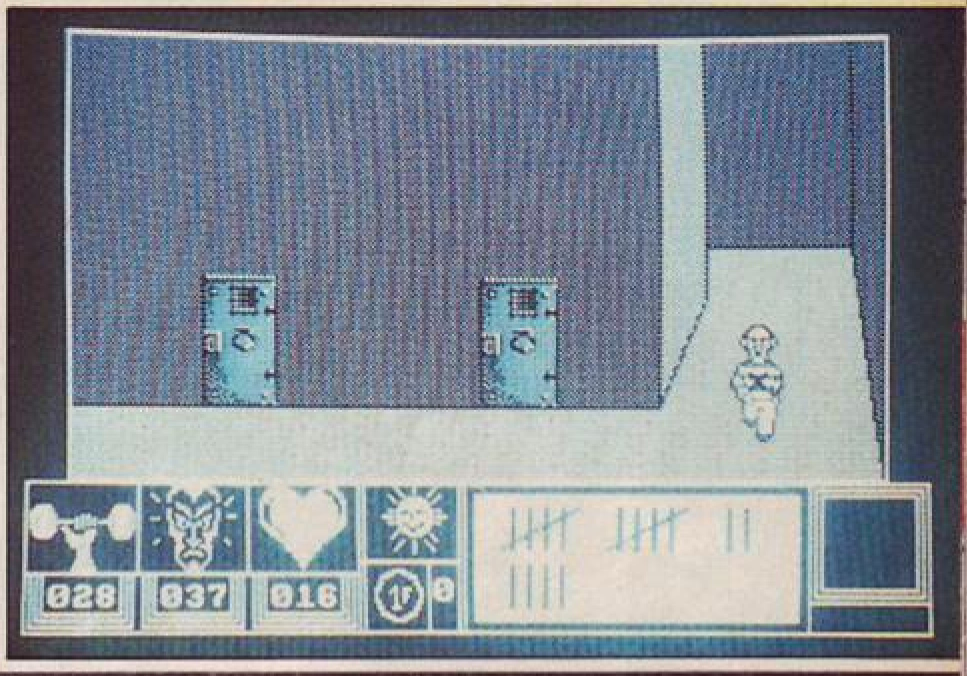
This is another winner as far as we're concerned with excellent graphics, sound and gameplay. It looks like Europe is no longer a software desert and has plenty of exciting and original prospects to offer. BW

Crafton & Xunk

Let's get the name over with first: Crafton is an android, Xunk his trusty podocephalus (a small dog-like creature consisting of one foot and a head). Their mission, as explained in the witty cartoon instructions, is to find the room where Zarxas, the central computer controlling the whole galaxy, is kept. To do this they have to discover a code composed of eight different numbers. Each of these is held by a different white-bearded professor: you have to get the right object and give it to the right prof to get the pieces.

The display is a 3D view of the various rooms, not unlike some Ultimate ˇ games. The graphics, while not having quite the definition of *Eden Blues*, are very colourful and very funny. Xunk rushes around all over the place until you call him to heel, while the rooms are full of robotic guards who pester and push you around. The nasty greaser from the title screen of *Macadam Bumper* also puts in appearance – but if you can find the magnet you can play a very nasty trick on him.

Crafton was written by Remi Herbulot, whose previouys effort was *Macadam Bumper*. The game's not quite finished, but it looks as though it's going to be a massive and very entertaining puzzle.



The ominous environment of the prison with your status display below it

From what we've seen of the French version of the game this looks set to be a massive hit – all it lacked was some music, but judging from *Eden Blues* that should be pretty good too.

The graphics are the first striking thing about the game with each room and corridor being viewed from the same sort of above and diagonal angle as *Knight Lore, Alien 8* and *Sweevo's World*. The design and look of the rooms, though, is far superior with lots of different colours in each and plenty of features that can be moved or which nip around under their own steam. It's got the object manipulation and freedom of action of the Ultimate and Gargoyle games combined with the graphic attractiveness of something like *Everyone's a Wally*.

There are quite a few animated characters and all of these seem to have real personality including the woolly-hatted android, hyperactive podocephalus, scatty professor, green mohicanned punk and the weird collection of blue, metallic robot guards. Different objects will interact with different characters. The most important task is the discovery of the codes from the professors with which you solve the game.

It's not just the objects you can pick up and use that are of interest – a lot of the furniture is helpful. Crafton can push or pull the furniture and jump on it as well and in this way solve puzzles as to how to get at some object or door. The doors are sometimes locked and passcards are needed to get them to slide open.

While fascinated by all these wondrous happenings you may not notice your energy running out, particularly when encountering robots, punks and profs. You can replace it at holophonic cabins.

All in all this looks like being PSS's biggest game yet – we can't wait to review the completed English version. The only question left is – what the heck is that podocephalus supposed to do? BW



Crafton is the guy in the silly hat with his faithful pod' in orange

Contamination

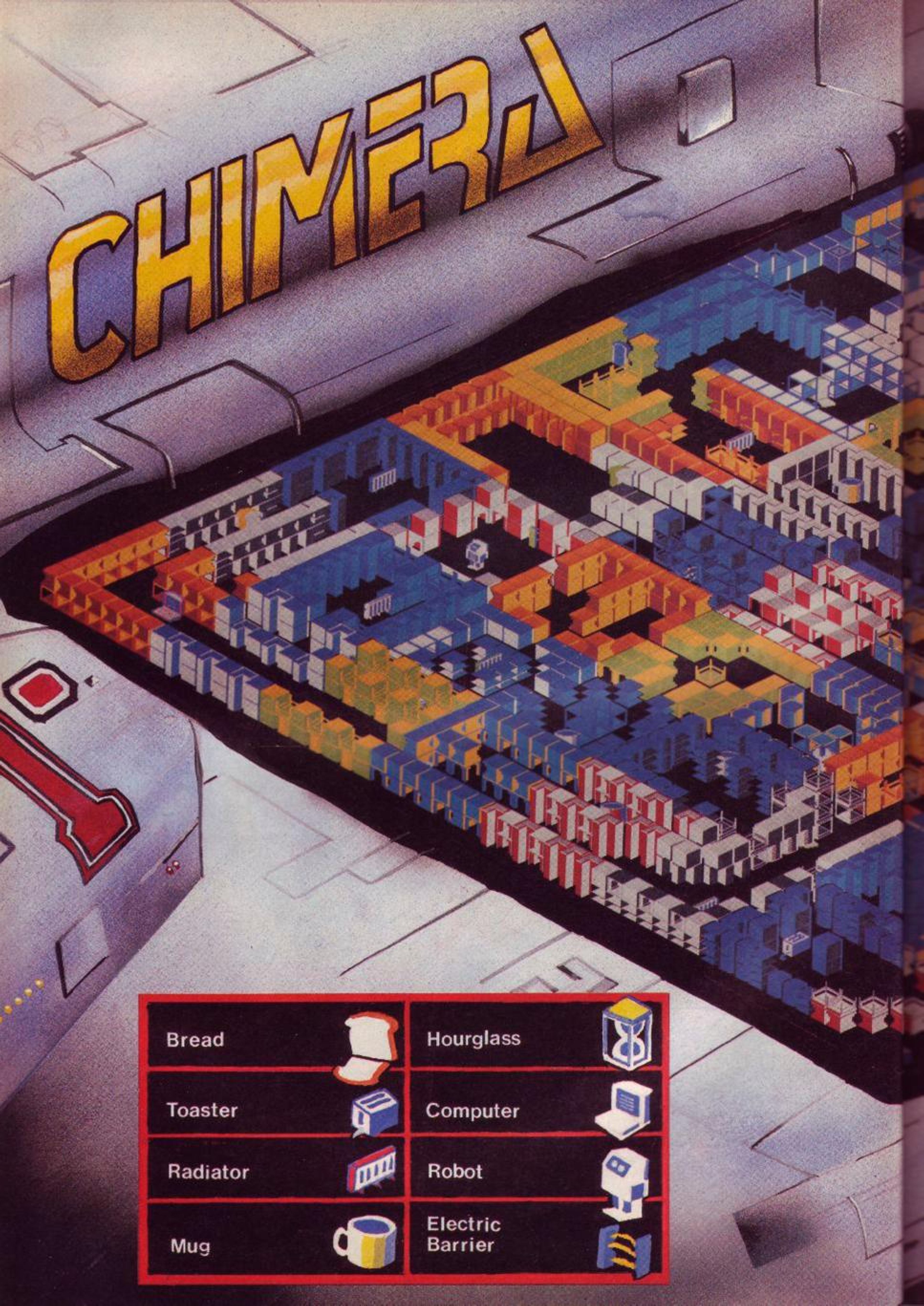
A different kettle of fish, this one. It's a strategy game which puts you in charge of the World Health Organisation in the fight to stop the spread of horrible diseases.

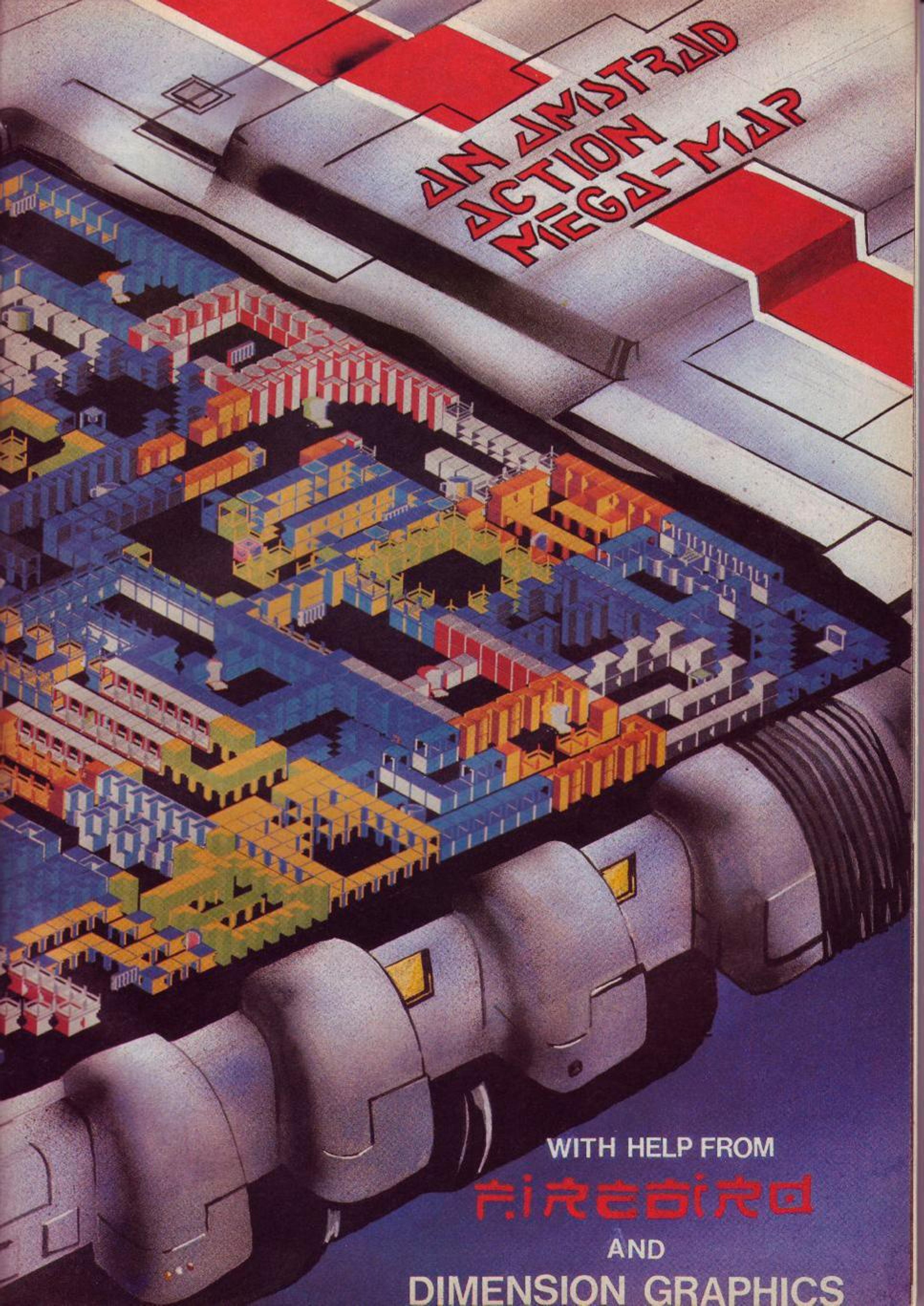
When a disease breaks out you can choose how to deal wiht it from a number of options. Most drastic of these is the nuclear option – although which disease would merit that particular treatment I can't imagine. You can seal off the area by establishing a *cordon sanitaire*, you can burn the area or you can retire to the laboratory and create an anti-virus. If you choose this last option an arcade sequence will follow.

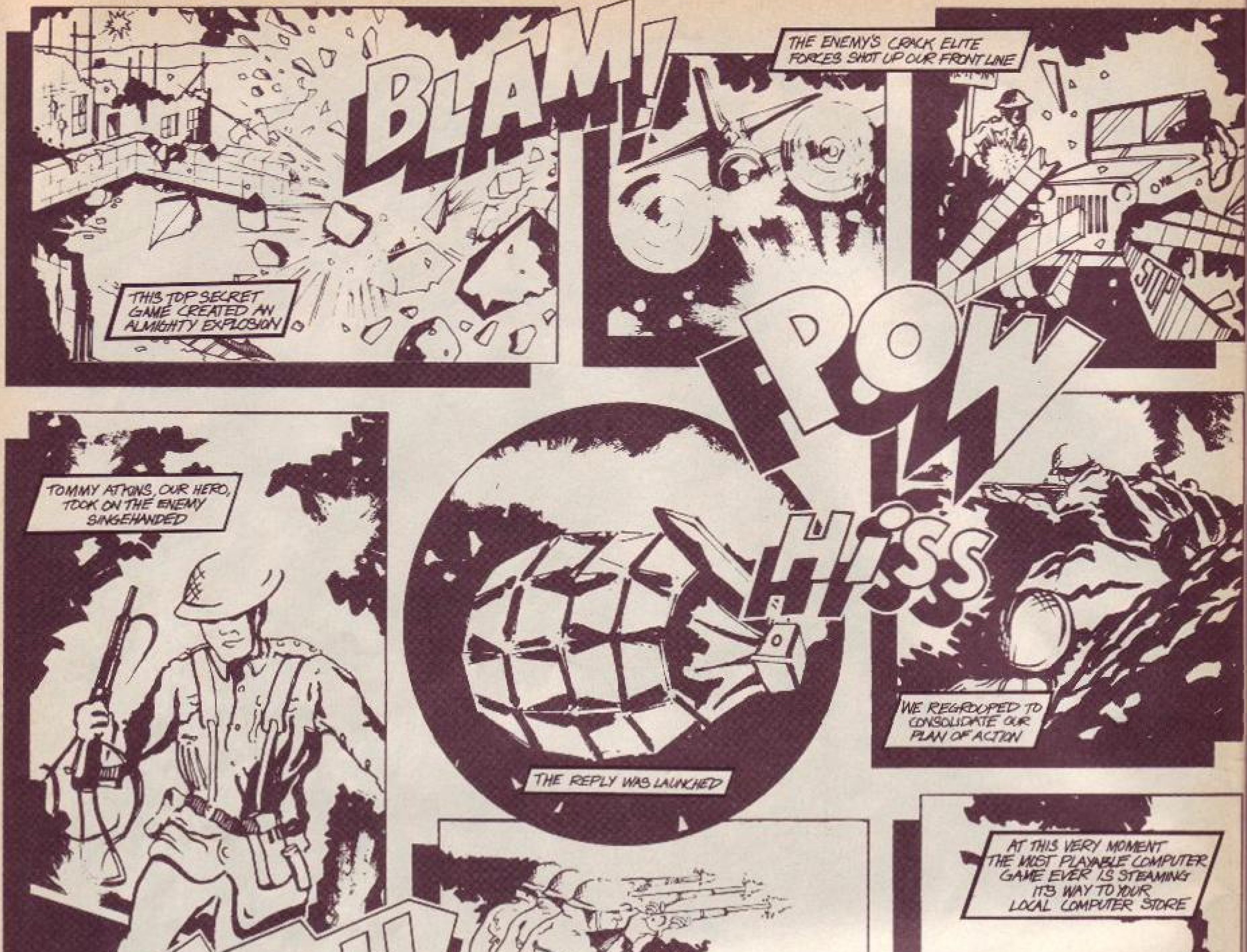
Naturally, you resources are limited, so you have to be careful in allocating them to areas and diseases which need them most. Only when the world is free from disease will you have won.



The menu giving your options in dealing with the disease


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The hi-score file has been getting fatter and fatter this month – indeed it's taken to sitting in the corner of the office munching forms and belching out the occasional challenge. A number of replies to challenges have been received, causing the file acute indigestion as many scores have had to be reinstated – the clouds of paper spewed out by the poor wretch were not a pretty sight.

The response to the hit list of games we gave you was excellent, so from now on there will be one regularly to show you the hot games where most competition is expected. If you've got any of the following titles get cracking with those scores: *Bruce Lee, Cauldron, Daley Thompson's Supertest, Hypersports, Kung Fu, Number One, Strangeloop, TLL* and *Who Dares Wins II.*

Ahhh!
19,400 Gregory Nicholas, Hardwicke.
12,320 Flemming Pedersen, Denmark.

Air Traffic Control
90% Kelvin Clarke, Telford.
86% Dr Nigel Wheeldon MB ChB.
70% Andrew Feeley, Whitefield.

Airwolf
796 Gareth Powers, Clapton.

Alien Break-In
337,400 Iain McKinnon, Glasgow.
292,164 Paul Mackenzie, Lenzie.
290,680 Graeme Taylor, East Kilbride.

Amsgolf
51 shots Daniel Elkington, Solihull.
54 shots Andrew Feeley, Whitefield.
55 shots Stephen Gray, Bath.
55 shots Mike Drury, Swinton.

Android One
17,680 David Litherland, Bolton.

Android Two
9,720 Paul Rushton, Market Drayton.

Hi-score laws

Unfortunately I am just not bloody-minded enough to stay up half the night trying to coax an extra jiggle or zap so I don't have anything to offer in the way of cosmically high scores. Nor do I know enough about the games to actually challenge any of the scores printed. I can however offer several observations which you may want to consider.

Firstly, are we to assume that all of the high scores represented so far are achieved while playing the highest difficulty level for the particular game involved? 452,000 is impressive for *Harrier Attack* if achieved on level four, not so impressive on level one. I think it would be well for all entrants to undertake that the score achieved was done at the most difficult level, or state at which level it was accomplished. At least that way it puts the score into perspective.

Secondly, there are many games which are open to high score competition but due to their nature are either not scored by simple numbers of points or people might not think to include in high score setting. I have two modest accomplishments which fall into both categories: *Lords of Midnight* – fall of Ushgarak in 53 days; *Scrabble* – score of 487 (level 4). There are other games which could be included so let's hear from the non-zappers out there. This is our mag too!

M Girouard
Tadworth

The idea about the difficulty levels I heartily agree with – so from now on people should state on what level a score was achieved when it is applicable. For Harrier Attack *and other older games it's rather hard to start doing this now but certainly it will apply to future games.*

The second point is more problematic. Certainly there is room for these other ratings to be included but there are many difficulties involved. On Lords of Midnight *the fall of Ushgarak isn't the only way to win the game so how do you decide which to take, the war game or Morkin's quest? And are other factors like number of Lords alive and men important?*

Other problems include games with both points and percentage scores like Sabre Wulf. *Which do you take as the score since the two aren't directly connected? Where we can get round these difficulties the scores will be printed but problems will always remain, particularly with arcade adventures when people send in a high score saying "completed" which isn't much use, or where there is no clear measure of success in the game.*

Battle Beyond the Stars
14,000 Helge Borchsenius, Nittedal, Norway.
7,425 Flemming Pedersen, Denmark.

Beach Head
150,650 Jonathan Stewart, Dundee.
124,000 Richard Ormson, Bury.
122,100 Jeremy Nargi, Hove.

Blagger
54,840 Alasdair Carnie, Dalkeith.
50,125 Paul Stagg, Rickmansworth.
49,975 Alain Salesse, Farnborough.

Boulderdash
118,895 Chris Surawy, Chippenham.
36,819 Derek Churcher, Gosport.
33,649 Simon Cuddeford, Kenilworth.

Brian Jacks Superstar Challenge
4,126 Thomas Tofield, Ashford.
3,636 George Reaves, Bradford.
3,521 David Millar, Johnstone.

Bruce Lee
780,800 Jeremy Bowden, Loughborough.
385,805 Ralph Turner, Newport.
225,500 Lee Grendall, Blackburn.

Cauldron
15,300 DMK Wearring, Milton Keynes.
6,650 Jonathan Hunt, Tottenham.

Chiller
8,700 Ian Grainger, Wingate.
7,200 Justin Leahy, Eltham.
6,500 Iain McKinnon, Glasgow.

Chimera
1,825 Colin Morrison, Perth.
1,230 Christopher Place, Heywood.
965 FJ Griffiths, Birkenhead.

Chuckie Egg
535,400 A Grimshaw, Blackburn.
418,070 Andy McCammont, Darlington.
395,180 David Carr, Macclesfield.

Eggs chucked back

In issue four Stewart Russell made a claim that "it was not humanly possible to get past level 24" on *Chuckie Egg*. In the same issue I had a score of 269,400 printed for the same game and I totally agreed with him as every game I got to level 24, lost about 20 lives and ended up with a score of about 269,000.

However, I carried on trying and, by following the policy of getting an egg by committing suicide, managed to clear 24,25,26 and 27, ending up with a score of 375,380.

Mark Wagner
Pinner

This point of view was overwhelmingly upheld by other writers including Nicholas Oldrini of Horsham, who gives this advice on getting past levels 24 and 25.

The secret of level 24 is to muck around on the ladder and platforms in the upper right corner. On level 25, move to left and get egg but not seed, go up second ladder on right and hurtle left between the two ducks. Then get to the top as fast as possible.

Combat Lynx
176,850 Alan Stenson, Catterick Garrison.
175,300 David Pollard, Headingley.
136,760 William Jenkins, Cramlington.

Confuzion
143,000 Duncan Ellis, Ilkley
126,775 Jason Grandin, Penylan
81,835 Danny Jarman, Stanstead Abbotts

Daley Thompson's Decathlon (One day)
130,360 Steven Dunn, Cookham
128,210 FJ Griffiths, Birkenhead
111,740 Graeme Taylor, East Kilbride

DT pause

I would like it brought to your attention that there **is** a pause facility in *DT's Decathlon* as opposed to Joanne Kingdom's claim that there isn't.

The pause is available on the non-running events. When "Go" comes onto the screen press the joystick once to the left or right and the game can be left for as long as you like.

I am very disappointed that nobody "accused" has yet defended themselves, especially on *DT's Decathlon* as very high scores can be obtained by using this pause facility when the arm begins to ache.

Fred Perkin

Others also wrote in pointing out this pause facility which does make the scores in the millions possible, if a little boring to achieve. However I hope everybody has noticed we've switched to single day totals for the game rather than running totals for more than one day.

Fruit Machine
£36.50 John Peberdy, Basingstoke
£35.70 Daniel Elkington, Solihull
£29.50 Richard Kiddle, Wisbech

Fruity Frank
36,010 Andy Keeble, Bromley
25,210 Andrew Heuze, Radcliffe
15,600 N Miller, Tonbridge

Galactic Plague
105,700 Graham Potter, Hull
100,610 Joanne Kingdon, Yeovil
99,960 D Woodman, London

Gauntlet
201,500 Jonathan Shaw, Liskeard
11,660 Conrad Chin, Edinburgh
11,490 Paul Hyett, Cheltenham

Dark Star
130,000 Graeme Taylor, East Kilbride
126,520 Donald Sharkey, Scunthorpe
123,400 Ian Boffin, Woking

Death Wake
173,102 Jonathan West, Romford

Defend or Die
4,340,000 Simon Sutton, Cheltenham
2,099,250 P.A Hyett, Cheltenham
2,033,650 Jonathan Stewart, Dundee

Devil's Crown
543,780 Jeremy Nargi, Hove
42,200 G Smith, Sheffield
40,610 RM Thompson, Grangemouth

Electro Freddy
4,035 Alvin Thompson, Hebburn
3,410 Thomas Tofield, Ashford
2,750 Simon Dooley, Bolton

Er*Bert
126,850 Richard Denton, Torquay
111,000 Lawrence Smith, Newport
66,950 AD Phung, Dunfermline

Everyone's a Wally
3,000 A Grimshaw, Blackburn
1,570 Antony Critchley, Bracknell
1,570 Paul Carruthers, Lytham

Fighting Warrior
92,800 Michael Clark, Midlothian
87,600 Wayne Fitton, Gloucester
76,620 Stuart Bruce, Cleator

Ghouls
7,090 Paul Stagg, Rickmansworth
6,040 Peter Wright, Stourport
5,030 Jason Grandin, Cardiff

Gilligan's Gold
500,200,000 Ian Leitch, Blandford (!!!)
598,100 Michael Clark, Midlothian
318,179 C Johnson, Sutton Coldfield

3D Grand Prix
9,738 David Vincent, Hernbay
9,292 Duncan Watt, Aldershot
8,750 Christopher Hardy, Weymouth

Grand Prix Rally II
70,690 FJ Griffiths, Birkenhead
56,740 S Tomlinson, Hull
54,474 Geoff Kerslake, Woodham Ferrers

Gyroscope
14,800 Marcus Passant, Perton
13,460 Bob Wade, Somerton
12,360 Roger Wilson, Blackburn

Harrier Attack
770,450 Graham Ross, Devizes
599,870 Mike Drury, Swinton
517,050 Darrel Fletcher, Gosport

Higher harrier

I, Darrel Fletcher, am replying to Harvey Case's mini-challenge about *Harrier Attack* scores over 500,000. It is possible to get a score above 500,000 and I've done it with a score of 517,050 starting from level one right up to level five.

The way to do it is to take off and go full speed. You slow right down as you get to the patrol boat. I can get three hits on the boat usually but I have managed four. You then speed right up and ignore the flak and shoot the planes. This is done by flying straight so that when the plane appears and fires its missile you fire yours and move up. The missile is guided and moves up with you as does the enemy plane so that you hit it.

Darrel Fletcher
Gosport

Enough said Darrell. The scores go back.

Highway Encounter
116,720 J Jefferies, Chippenham
96,470 Nicholas Jefferies, Chippenham
76,120 Ian Boffin, Woking

Hunchback
1,506,000 Michael Clark, Midlothian
1,000,000 Kevin McKeown Jnr, Armadale
625,000 Graeme Taylor, East Kilbride

Hunchback II
9,000 Jason Carpenter

Hypersports
116,573 Paul Edwards, Stevenage
91,475 George Reaves, Bradford
60,015 Martin Paterson, Glasgow

Jet Boot Jack
86,925 Flemming Pedersen, Denmark
75,525 Paul Lawson, Kincorth
50,150 Martin Ellerker, Peterborough

Jet Set Willy
175 items Daniel Hart, Loughton
134 items Paul Broadley, Glasgow
125 items Harpal Kooner, Birmingham

Juggernaut
48,900 Eric Henry, Drogheda
9,500 Michael Speers, Donaghadee

Killer Gorilla
200,000 Adrian McGivern, Dorchester
170,700 Guy Nussey, Stoke-on-Trent
153,900 Eric Henry, Drogheda

Kong Strikes Back
535,600 C Johnson, Sutton Coldfield
204,400 Richard Walker, Crewe
188,100 Phillip Gower, Newport

Kung Fu
648 Wayne Fitton, Gloucester
639 Mark Probert, Nuneaton
610 Donald Weir, Neilston

Laserwarp
207,000 Michael Wilkes, Stourbridge
198,860 T Grogan, Blackburn
159,980 Denis Condren, Filey

Locomotion
5,338 Christoper Eng, London
3,577 Mike Drury, Swinton
2,558 Michael Downie, Dalston

Manic Miner
250,112 Wayne Learoyd, Bramley
94,989 Martin Luise, Solihull
92,804 Gordon Edgar, Buckie

Minder
£19,229 Mark Tozer, Canvey Island
£12,666 David Gibbon, Bearpark
£8,950 Paul Sutcliffe, Shaftesbury

Mr Freeze
16,240 Peter Wright, Stourport
13,870 Jamie Thomson, Leighton Buzzard
3,310 Darren Dunbar, Wrexham

Mutant Monty
48,150 Marcus Passant, Perton
44,950 A Wagstaffe, Whitchurch
43,180 Alastair Kerr, Plymouth

Nightshade
943,120 Ralph Turner, Newport

Hi SCORE

534,000 Bob Wade, Somerton.

Number One
574 Bob Wade, Somerton.
537 Sonia Elton, Skegness.
450 Graeme Taylor, East Kilbride.

On the Run
74,110 Daniel Singerman, Southampton.
74,060 Patrick McCorry, Belfast.
60,000 Ranjit Singh, Queen's Park.

Pinball Wizard
31,775 Roger Wilson, Blackburn.
29,550 Paul Smith, Huddersfield.
25,445 Stuart Russell, East Kilbride.

Punchy
1,132,320 Mark Salt, Irlam.
235,990 Alan Jackson, Wolverhampton.
70,130 Richard Denton, Torquay.

Raid
1,117,200 Alan Stenson, Catterick.
676,550 Kevin McCaughey, Bangor.
562,500 Colin Hardie, Tranent.

Red Arrows
65,416 S. Glendenning, Darlington.
62,400 Stewart Hackley, Poynton.

Rock Raid
32,780 Stephen Gray, Bath.

Roland Ahoy!
6,270 Peter Bisson, Leyland.
6,265 Alastair Budd, Lincoln.
5,140 Mark Blakemore, Liverpool.

Roland in the Caves
980,770 Rajpal Singh, West Glasgow.
902,768 Evan Welsh, Leven.
899,908 Mark McGinlay, Welwyn.

Roland in Time
153 crystals Andrew Marshall, London.
149 crystals Kenny Macaskill, Alloa.
143 crystals George Reaves, Bradford.

Roland on the Ropes
2,000,750 Adrian Johnston, Shrewsbury.
1,420,100 Stewart Hackley, Poynton.
1,310,100 Martin Ellerker, Peterborough.

Martin off the ropes

Re: *Roland on the Ropes.* First I shall start by saying that the score after 999,999 goes back to zero. Therefore you add the second score to your first to get your overall score.

Secondly, my score should have read 1,310,100.

Thirdly, the lowest score you can get is 50 not 100.

Fourthly, it only took me five and a half hours to get the score NOT 13 hours as prompted by David White.

Martin Ellerker
Peterborough

Well said Martin. Your corrected score is back in the tables and any future score entries should be easily checkable.

Sabre Wulf
122,175 Craig Thomson, Eyemouth.
59,620 Jeremy Bowden, Loughborough.

Sorcery
Lots of people over 97,000.

Sorcery Plus
137,634 Derek Henderson, Clarkston.
137,622 Paul Broadley, Glasgow.
137,527 Paul Broadley, Glasgow.

Space Hawks
77,550 Mark Wagner, Pinner.
75,150 Stewart Hackley, Poynton.
74,850 Gary Callan, Exeter.

Spannerman
82,400 Julian Cater, East Sheen.
66,500 Donald Sharkey, Scunthorpe.
65,000 Stephen Gray, Bath.

Splat
22,535 David Cobane, Wythenshawe.

Starion
32,911 Sean Brady, Eltham.
31,406 Steve Hancock, Carlisle.
31,343 James Broadhurst, Amtioch.

3D Starstrike
10,031,000 Joseph Farrington, Warrington.
7,600,000 Colin Hardie, Tranent.
5,600,000 Spencer Harrison, Hartley Wintney.

Steve Davis Snooker
113 Graeme Taylor, East Kilbride.
112 break St John Bird, Fakenham.
110 David Woodfield, Walsall.

Strangeloop
6,117 Brad Howarth, Saltford.

Sultan's Maze
1,810 Clive James, Newport.
1,772 Richard Denton, Torquay.

Super Pipeline II
2,338,340 Joseph Dittman, Wigan.
1,228,055 Graham Ross, Devizes.
426,460 Matthew Burbedge, Sittingbourne.

Tankbusters
18,300 Ian Boffin, Woking.
450 RG Messenger, Perth.

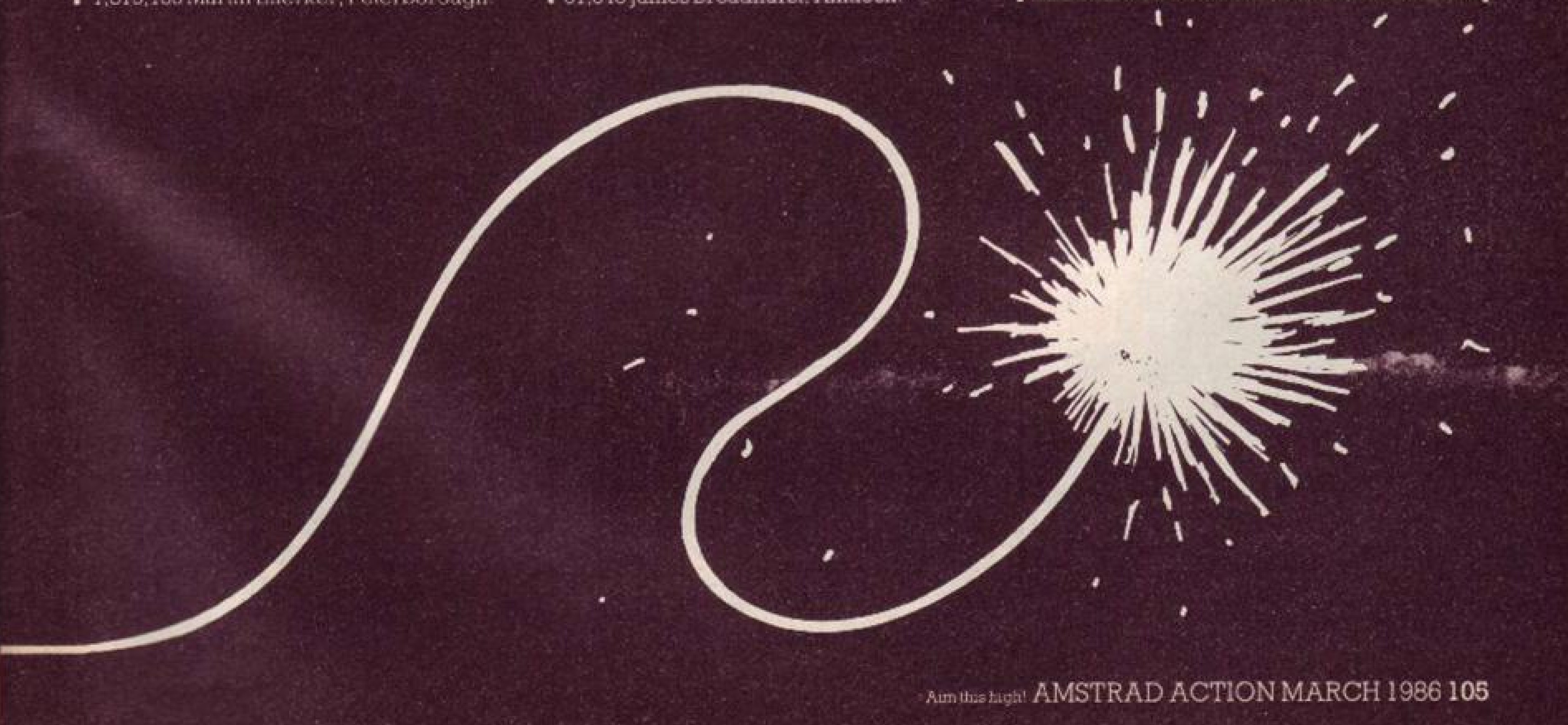
TLL
10,260 Graeme Taylor, East Kilbride.
10,110 James Leighton, Chelmsford.
8,130 Darren Ryder, Leighton Buzzard.

The Way of the Exploding Fist
2,193,000 Matthew Lerrigo, London.
1,137,800 Adrian Leigh, Stockport.
968,700 Flemming Pedersen, Denmark.

Who Dares Wins II
67,250 Simon O'Connell, Sidcup.
39,570 Jonathan Stewart, Dundee.
34,800 Christopher Hardy, Weymouth.

Wizard's Lair
168,385 Adrian Leigh, Stockport.
152,000 Paul Lewis Northwich.
142,250 Wyndham Rennie, Radstock.

Yie Ar Kung-Fu
9,567,000 Peter Clark, Ibrox.
9,484,180 Ralph Turner, Newport.
7,192,020 Matthew Wood, Loughton.



STUNNING SOFTWARE $AVINGS!

Wake up to Amstrad Action's unique mail order service

Watch out for your fingers, these pages are HOT! They give you a way of getting hold of sizzling software at sizzling discounts. Simply by using the vouchers printed below, you can obtain discounts ranging from 50p to a full £5 on the programs you want. It makes it easy to recoup the complete cost of this magazine at a stroke!

In addition to these discounts, almost all orders qualify for a special, no-strings-attached FREE GIFT ranging from blank cassettes to full-priced games.

We know of no more exciting way of getting the programs you need.

► Reliable

► Economic

► Fast

For collectors of 5% vouchers

As you can see, this month we're slightly changing our discount voucher scheme, so that instead of having to collect vouchers people can claim their discount immediately with a single voucher.

However if you've been collecting our 5% vouchers from previous issues you can still use these INSTEAD of the new vouchers. You can also – for this month only – use the 50p voucher printed on this page as an additional 5% voucher. In other words, if you've already collected two 5% vouchers from two different earlier issues of AA you can send them in together with the 50p voucher and claim a total discount of 15% off your order. This applies only to orders received before March 15th, 1986.

What you CANNOT do is claim a reduction using one of the new vouchers, and at the same time claim a further discount using your 5% vouchers.

FREE!

with any order over £5

A C15 data cassette. These cassettes contain high-quality tape especially designed for use by computer owners. They come in library case with blank inlay card.

FREE!

with any order over £15

Your pick of any one of the games featured in the SOFTWARE SUPER-SALE box! They're worth from £8-10 each! (Please note, you should specify a second choice on the order form in case your first choice is out of stock.)

FREE!

with any order over £30

Your pick of any TWO of the games featured in the SOFTWARE SUPER-SALE box! It means you can pick up games whose shop price is worth more than half your total order! (Please note, you should specify second choices on the order form in case your first choices are out of stock.)

50p VOUCHER
For use with orders from £5.00-£9.99
(max. one voucher per order)

£1 VOUCHER
For use with orders from £10.00-£19.99
(max. one voucher per order)

£2 VOUCHER
For use with orders from £20.00-£49.99
(max. one voucher per order)

£5 VOUCHER
For use with orders over £50.00
(max. one voucher per order)



The rave way of buying raves

If you're not sure quite what games you'd like you could do worse than make a selection from this list – it's made up of programs given an AA Rave review in this or previous issues of Amstrad Action. Remember that by sending in vouchers you can obtain considerable savings on the listed prices.

YIE AR KUNG FU
Hilarious combat action. £8.95 cass
BOUNTY BOB STRIKES BACK
Oh-so-addictive platforming. £9.95 cass, £13.95 disk.
SPY VS SPY
Wacky cartoon capers. £9.95 cass.
BATTLE OF BRITAIN
Classy wargame. £9.95 cass.
3D GRAND PRIX
Tire-burning graphics! £9.95 cass £13.95 disk.
BRUCE LEE
Leaping and fighting. £9.95 cass, £13.95 disk
RAID
Bombing the Commies. £9.95 cass, £13.95 disk
MATCHDAY
Skilful soccer play. £8.95 cass
NIGHTSHADE
Dazzling graphics from Ultimate. £9.95 cass
SWEEVO'S WORLD
Humourous, stylish, brain-teasing. £7.95 cass
TLL
Unbelievable scrolling. £8.95 cass
BARRY McGUIGAN'S BOXING
Best Amstrad boxing game. £9.95 cass
BOULDER DASH
You can't stop playing. £9.95 cass
LORDS OF MIDNIGHT
Great adventure epic. £8.95 cass £12.95 disk
CYRUS 2 CHESS
Looks superb, plays tough. £9.95 cass £13.95 disk
WAY OF THE EXPLODING FIST
Smash-hit combat. £9.95 cass
WHO DARES WINS II
Great Commando-style shoot-em-up. £8.95 cass
SPELLBOUND
Bargain arcade-adventure. £2.99 cass
TANK COMMAND
Tough battle-field action. £13.95 disk
SKYFOX
3D air combat simulator. £9.95 cass
DALEY THOMPSON's SUPERTEST
Eight more gruelling events. £8.95 cass

IMPORTANT

► If you want the disk version of a game you must mark this clearly on the order form. Otherwise you'll get a cassette. Do check first that a disk version exists and that you have the right price for it.

► We try to be as accurate as we can in giving details on price and disk version availability. However we can't be held liable for any errors which may have crept in.



HOW ORDERS ARE DEALT WITH

Amstrad Action Mail Order is run here in Somerton, but in a separate location from the main AA HQ. The operation is run by the super-efficient SUE TAYLOR, the woman who gets more mail in a day than most people get each year!

Unless your order includes programs which our suppliers cannot get hold of for some reason, Sue will despatch all packages within three days of receiving them. Therefore, allowing for the time in the post, you can normally expect to receive your parcel within a week to 10 days of ordering.

If it's delayed beyond that, the chances are you've ordered a title which either hasn't yet been released or is temporarily unavailable. In which case a phone call from you WON'T speed things up. (In fact, the reverse. Phone-calls are very time-consuming to deal with.) Naturally, if a long delay was likely we'd let you know.

Selecting serious software

If games aren't your scene, how about choosing one of these excellent programs (or any other serious software...)?

TASWORD 6128
Superb word-processor for 6128 owners making full use of the extra memory. £24.95 disk.

TASWORD 464/464D
The earlier versions for 464 or 664 owners. The disk program includes a mail-merge facility. £19.95 cass, £24.95 disk.

IDISCOVERY
Probably the best of the tape-to-disk copiers. £7.99 cass, £11.99 disk.

SUPERCALC 2
The amazing CP/M spreadsheet which sells for hundreds of pounds on other micros. £49.95 disk.

MASTERFILE
A good value database. £24.95 cass, £29.95 disk

MASTERCALC
Campbell Systems' powerful spreadsheet. Only £24.95 cass, £29.95 disk

SOFTWARE SUPER-SALE

These games only £2.95 each!

Hey, how about this? Sixteen Amstrad game-titles which you can buy at about ONE THIRD of the shop price! They may not be AA raves, but all but a couple are perfectly good pieces of software. Most received AA ratings of 60-70%, but that was based on their full asking price of £8-10. At just £2.95 each they're great bargains.

You can order them in the normal way by filling in the Mail Order Section of our All-in-One Action Form. And remember, if your order is large enough you can claim further discounts and maybe even extra games FREE!

AMERICAN FOOTBALL (Argus/Amsoft)
Good simulation needing accurate tactical thinking. AA Rating 70%

AMSGOLF (Computersmith/Amsoft)
How low can you get your handicap? AA Rating 67%.

CHUCKIE EGG (A'n'F)
Hugely addictive, high-scoring platform game. AA Rating 79%

CLASSIC ADVENTURE (Amsoft)
The great adventure that started it all. Pre Pilgrim.

CODENAME MAT (Amsoft/Micromega)
Demanding 3D space shoot-em-up. AA Rating 71%

ELECTRO FREDDY (Amsoft/Softspot)
Frantic, humourous, one-screen action. AA Rating 57%

HUNTER KILLER (Amsoft/Protek)
Submarine warfare simulation. AA Rating 47%

JET BOOT JACK (Amsoft/English Software)
Challenging platform game with slick graphics. AA Rating 70%

LASER WARP (Amsoft/MikroGen)
Smooth, colourful, classic shoot-em-up. AA Rating 54%.

MANIC MINER (Amsoft/Software Projects)
The classic wacky platform game. AA Rating 64%

MASTER CHESS (Amsoft/MikroGen)
Worthy multi-level chess game. AA Rating 60%

MESSAGE FROM ANDROMEDA
Offering for Adventure fans. Pre-pilgrim.

ROLAND GOES DIGGING (Amsoft/Gem)
Frenetic version of 'Space Panic'. AA Rating 54%

SPACE HAWKS (Amsoft/Durell)
Version of the shoot-em-up classic 'Galaxians'. AA Rating 49%

SPLAT! (Amsoft/Incentive)
Fast-moving, original arcade game. AA Rating 63%

SUPER-PIPELINE II (Amsoft/Taskset)
Nice graphics, nice music, zany action. AA Rating 71%

Overseas readers can join in!

Readers in the Republic of IRELAND can order any of these goods at the same rates as British readers provided that payment is made in pounds Sterling. If you wish to pay in Irish punts you must add a IR£3.50 surcharge IN ADDITION to allowing for the current exchange rate – that's what it costs us to pay in your cheques or postal orders.

Readers elsewhere in EUROPE must add 25% to the cost of their order to allow for extra postage rates. Payment must be in pounds Sterling.

If you live OUTSIDE EUROPE please add 50% to the cost of your order to cover postage. Please also specify whether you require air-mail or surface delivery. We will pay refunds in cases where the postage turns out substantially cheaper than the extra money you have paid. Once again, payment must be in pounds Sterling.

Amstrad Action Readers' Charts

A new leader at the top of the games charts – Imagine's smashing karate game *Yie Ar Kung Fu* has deposed Melbourne House's smashing karate game *Fist*. In fact, *Fist* has slipped down to seventh place. Has it got the stamina for a comeback?

Significant newcomers include *Barry McGuigan's Boxing, TLL* and *Who Dares Wins II*. They all look poised to charge up the charts next month.

The Serious chart still finds *Mini Office* cock of the walk. An interesting prospect in store here – what happens if *Mini Office 2* has similar success? AMX's Mouse has crept up to a very strong second place, while *Discovery*, from Siren, has charted at number 3.

SERIOUS SOFTWARE TOP 10

1. Mini Office
Database (18.5%)

2. AMX Mouse
AMS (14.1%)

3. Discovery
Siren (8.3%)

4. Graphic Adventure Creator
Incentive (6.7%)

5. Transmat
Pride Utilities (6.4%)

6. Tasword
Tasman (6.2%)

7. Odd Job
Pride Utilities (6.2%)

8. The Quill
Gilsoft (4.6%)

9. Screen Designer
Amsoft (3.95%)

10. Easi-Amsword
Amsoft (3.5%)

The Voting System

For anyone new to our state-of-the-art voting forms and system – or anyone STILL having trouble – here's another run down on what to so and how to do it.

You have at your disposal a TOTAL of 10 votes for each chart. These can be split up any way you like on up to five titles, but the number of votes you give to the different titles must add up to 10.

For example, on the games chart you could give all 10 votes to a single game. Or you could 5 votes to one game, 2 to another, and 1 each to three others. You just have to allocate your 10 votes to reflect your preferences as accurately as possible. What you CAN'T do is give five different games 7 or 8 votes each. That's greedy.

One further thing you certainly can't do is send in photocopies of the form. There have been attempts at jiggery-pokery in the past, so we want to avoid any possibility of it happening again.

GAMES TOP 20

1. Yie Ar Kung Fu
Imagine (15.5%)

2. Sorcery
Virgin/Amsoft (6.3%)

3. Elite
Firebird (5.6%)

4. Sorcery +
Virgin/Amsoft (4.3%)

5. Sabre Wulf
Ultimate (3.6%)

6. 3D Grand Prix
Amsoft (3.5%)

7. Way of the Exploding Fist
Melbourne House (3.3%)

8. Spy vs Spy
Beyond (2.8%)

9. TLL
Vortex (2.7%)

10. Barry McGuigan's Boxing
Activision (2.4%)

11. Hypersports
Imagine (2.4%)

12. Combat Lynx
Durell (1.97%)

13. Knight Lore
Ultimate (1.9%)

14. Strangeloop
Virgin (1.7%)

15. Starion
Melbourne House (1.7%)

16. Who Dares Wins II
Alligata (1.7%)

17. Cauldron
Palace Software (1.6%)

18. Soul of a Robot
Mastertronic (1.6%)

19. Lord of the Rings
Melbourne House (1.5%)

20. Highway Encounter
Vortex (1.5%)

THE ALL-IN-ONE ACTION FORM

WIN £25 OF SOFTWARE!!

Fill in as much of the form as you wish (front and back). Then cut out the ENTIRE PAGE (even if you've only filled in parts of it) and post it to:
AA Forms, 18 Pinewood Drive
Somerton, Somerset, TA11 6JP

IMPORTANT
Don't forget to fill in this bit!
Name ____
Age ____
Address ____
____
Telephone number ____

By filling in this part of the form, you gain the chance to win £25 of software of your choice. THREE of these unspeakably exciting prizes are on offer. All you have to do is invent a couple of little phrases to run along the bottom of our pages next to the words AMSTRAD ACTION – something as idiotic, yet appropriate as those in this issue.

The winners' phrases will undoubtedly be used in future issues, as may other peoples. Anything to save us having to think of them!

PHRASE 1:

PHRASE 2:

High-score challenge

I hereby challenge the following high scores printed in Amstrad Action:

	GAME	SCORE
1.		
2.		

I think the score(s) impossible because:

High-score entry

I would like to register my high-scores in the following Amstrad games:

	GAME	SCORE	TIME TAKEN	LEVEL
1.				
2.				
3.				

I promise these are genuine scores achieved without using cheat methods.
Signed

Game chart voting form

I would like to vote for the following game(s):

	GAME	SOFTWARE HOUSE	NO. OF VOTES
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			

Total number of votes = 10

Serious software voting form

I would like to vote for the following piece(s) of 'serious software':

	PROGRAM	SOFTWARE HOUSE	NO. OF VOTES
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			

Total number of votes = 10

SPECIAL OFFER
save £3!

THE MUSIC SYSTEM

If you haven't already, read the review elsewhere in this issue. This program is very special indeed – by far the most sophisticated music composing system available on the Amstrad. It allows you to create and play a wide range of synthesized sounds, turning your Arnold into a powerful musical keyboard.

It's already a bargain at its shop price of £15.95 on cassette, £19.95 disk. However you can buy it direct from us for even less. Just £12.95 cassette or £16.95 disk. It's a great offer for anyone interested in music.

To order, just circle one of the options below and enclose a cheque or postal order made payable to Future Publishing. Don't forget to fill in your name and address in the space on the back of this page! (Please note, this offer is separate from the rest of our mail order scheme – you cannot use the discount vouchers to claim a further reduction.)



Please rush me THE MUSIC SYSTEM on cassette at only £12.95.

Please rush me THE MUSIC SYSTEM on disk at only £16.95.

MINI OFFICE 2

Strange as it may seem for us to pour praise on a program produced by one of our leading competitors, it is nonetheless true: *Mini Office 2* (created by Database, publishers of 'Computing with the Amstrad') has to be the software bargain of the month! Six fully professional programs which can transform your computer into a machine of immense power. Writing letters, producing reports, making financial estimates may never be the same again – see the review in this issue for more details.

SPECIAL OFFER
save £4!



Normally the program costs £14.95 on cassette, £19.95 on disk and at that price represents astonishing value for money. But Amstrad Action readers can buy it for even less. Just £10.95 on cassette or £15.95 on disk, a full £4 saving! And that includes VAT, postage, packing, everything.

To order just circle one of the statements below, cut out the entire page and send it to the address overleaf, together with a cheque or postal order made out to Future Publishing. Don't forget to fill in your name and address on the other side of the form. (Please note, this offer is completely separate from the rest of our mail order scheme – you cannot claim a free game with it, or any further discount.)

Please rush me the CASSETTE version of Mini Office 2 at only £10.95.

Please rush me the DISK version of Mini Office 2 at only £15.95.

Fill in name and address overleaf!

Mail Order Section

I would like the following titles:

Game	**Software house**	**Retail price**
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		

Total cost pre-discount,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,

Please circle ONE of the following A-E if it applies:

A: The total cost is under £5.

B: The total cost is between £5 and £10, and I enclose a 50p discount voucher.

C: The total cost is between £10 and £15, and I enclose a £1 discount voucher.

D: The total cost is between £15 and £20. I enclose a £1 discount voucher and claim ONE free game.

E: The total cost is between £20 and £30. I enclose a £2 discount voucher and claim ONE free game.

F: The total cost is between £30 and £50. I enclose a £2 discount voucher and claim TWO free games.

G: The total cost is over £50. I enclose a £5 discount voucher and claim TWO free games.

H: I enclose 1/2/3/4 vouchers from earlier issues of AA, entitling me to a 5%/10%/15%/20% discount.

After allowing for discount the total amount payable is,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,

I enclose a cheque/postal order for this amount made out to Future Publishing.

If you are claiming a free game or games please CIRCLE your first choice(s) and place a TICK by any of the other titles you will accept if your first choice(s) are out of stock:

American Football / Amsgolf / Chuckie Egg / Classic Adventure / Code Name Matt / Electro Freddy / Hunter Killer / Hunchback / Jet Boot Jack / Laser Warp / MasterChess / Manic Miner / Message from Andromeda / Roland Goes Digging / Space Hawks / Splat! / Super Pipeline II

GRIP STICK · GRIP STICK · GRIP STICK · GRIP STICK · GRIP STICK · GRIP STICK · GRIP STICK · GRIP STICK · GRIP STICK

Now FINGER TIP CONTROL IS WITHIN YOUR GRASP.

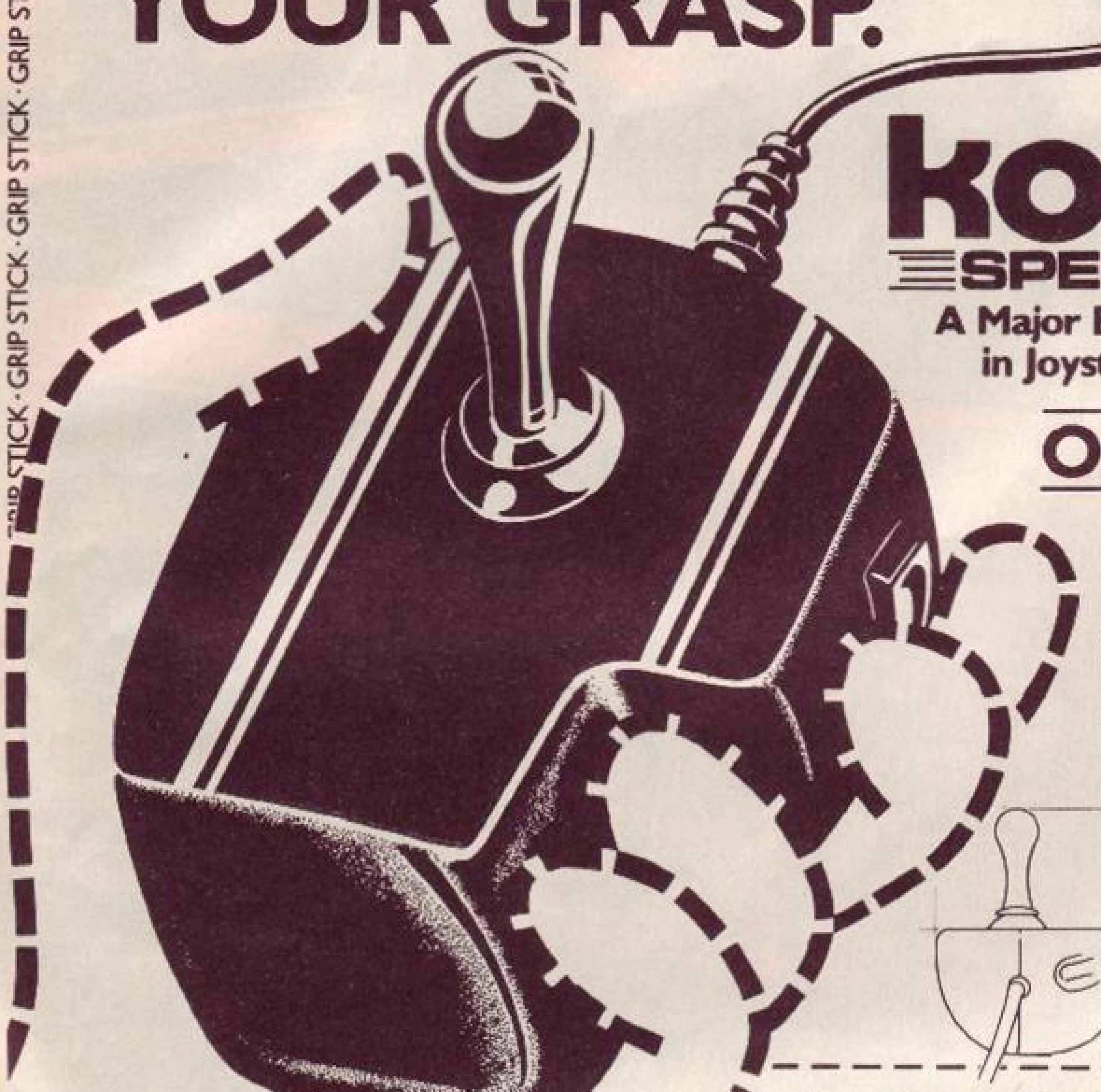
A totally new design gives instant response to your command movements.

Up to now Joysticks of the Speedking quality are priced at £20 and over. The Speedking is microswitch based, and costs only **£12.99, £14.99** for BBC & DRAGON machines.

Designed to fit your hand, not the table top, meaning comfort during the longest of games.

GUARANTEED for Twelve Months.

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Trade and export enquiries contact Keith or Wayne

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Konix Computer Products is a trading name of Creative Devices Research Ltd.



Please send me ...... Speedking(s) at £12.99 each

Computer make ....

I enclose cheque/postal order payable to KONIX

Please charge my Access/Visa ________

Card holders can call (0495) 711988 to order.

Signature ________

Name: ________

Address: ________

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Send to Konix Computer Products Unit 13 Sirhowy Ind Est Tredegar Gwent NP2 4QZ

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AA sensational subscription offer department presents...

FRE

MASTERGAM

FREE with a 6-month subscription

Continuing the tradition of astounding Amstrad Action subscription offers comes this virtually IRRESISTIBLE proposal. Subscribe to AA for as little as £8.25 and receive a stunning Mastergame of your choice absolutely free! Take up the offer and not only do you guarantee yourself a regular monthly supply of the world's most satisfying and modest Amstrad magazine, you also pick up one of the games which between them represent the cream of Amstrad leisure software over the last six months.

Each one of the titles on this page has received the much-coveted Mastergame award in a past issue of Amstrad Action. Each one is an outstanding piece of software which should provide you hours of entertainment. And all you need to do to get hold of one is take outeither a six-month or a 12-month subscription to AA.

You can even have TWO of the games that come free with a six-month subscription by doubling up and taking out a 12-month subscription here and now.

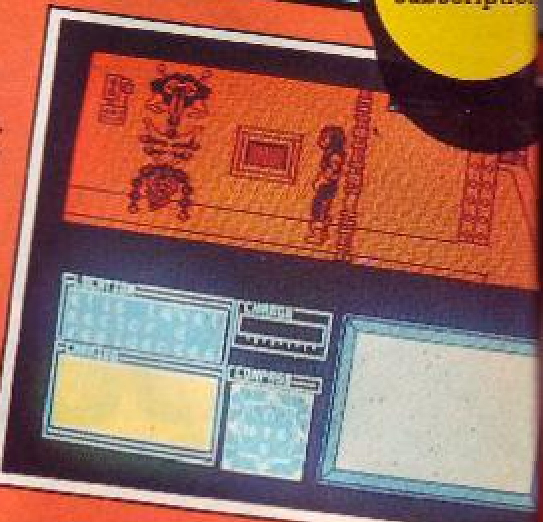
Although this offer applies only to the CASSETTE versions of these programs, disk owners too can cash in with one of the Amsoft range of disk games – see separate panel for details.

Phew! It's a scorcher.

Blurb A

MARSPORT (normally £9.95)

A vast arcade-adventure, this, from masters of the art Gargoyle Games. You control a superbly-animated spaceman working his way around the many levels and rooms of a giant space-station. You encounter flesh-creeping, evil creatures and must solve many devious puzzles. The game is the first in Gargoyle's Seige of Earth trilogy. Get it, and you'll hardly be able to wait for parts two and three.



FREE with a 6-month subscription!

YIE AR KUNG FU (normally £8.95)

By the end of 1985 everyone thought they'd seen all there was to see in a combat game – and then came Imagine's Yie Ar Kung Fu. Fantastic, colourful graphics, eight very different opponents, humour, music, excitement. This one's got it all. How do you handle Bucha the human cnnonball? Have you the timing to dodge the evil metal stars hurled at you by 'Star'? Can you outleap the vicious Nuncha with his stick and chains? If you aren't one of the thousands who already own this game, now's your chance.



Advantages of subscribing

There's more than one reason, apart from the prospect of superb free software, for taking out a subscription to Amstrad Action.

- You're guaranteed each month's copy delivered hot off the press straight to your home – no frustrating trips to newsagents who've sold out.
- You guard against the possibility of future price rises in the magazine. For example we stuck a cassette to the front cover of our Christmas 1985 issue and raised the price to £1.50 – subscribers, however received it at no extra cost. It could happen again!
- You qualify for further special offers in future issues.
- You give valuable support to Amstrad Action, the independent magazine written FOR Amstrad addicts BY Amstrad addicts.

The annual subscription fee of £16.50 includes the cost of posting 12 issues to you – there's nothing more to pay.

If you already subscribe...

Our existing subscribers can also benefit from this special offer by buying ANY of these games at a massive £3 discount per game!

All you have to do is write down on a piece of paper your name and address, the subscriber's number printed on your address label (if you can find it!) and the game(s) you want to order. Allow a discount of £3 for each program ordered and make out a cheque for the total amount to Future Publishing.

Then send off your order to:

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AMSTRAD ACTION
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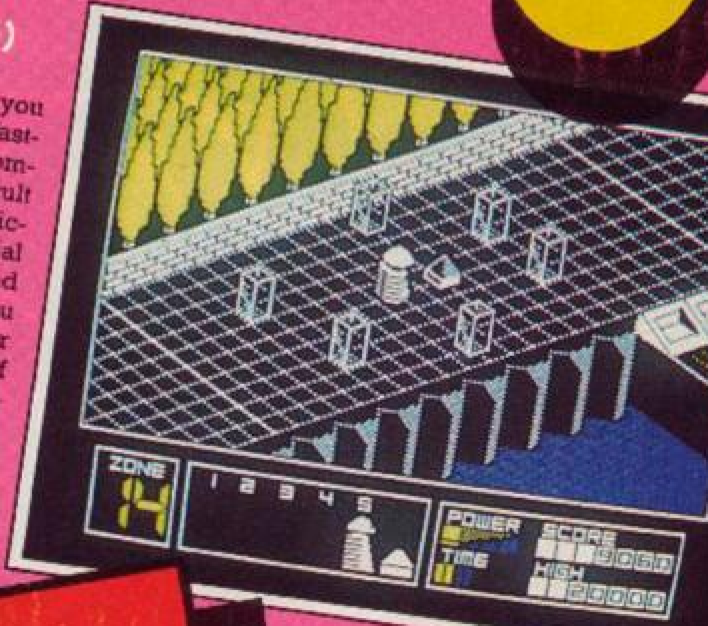
E

ES!

FREE with a 6-month subscription!

HIGHWAY ENCOUNTER (normally £8.95)

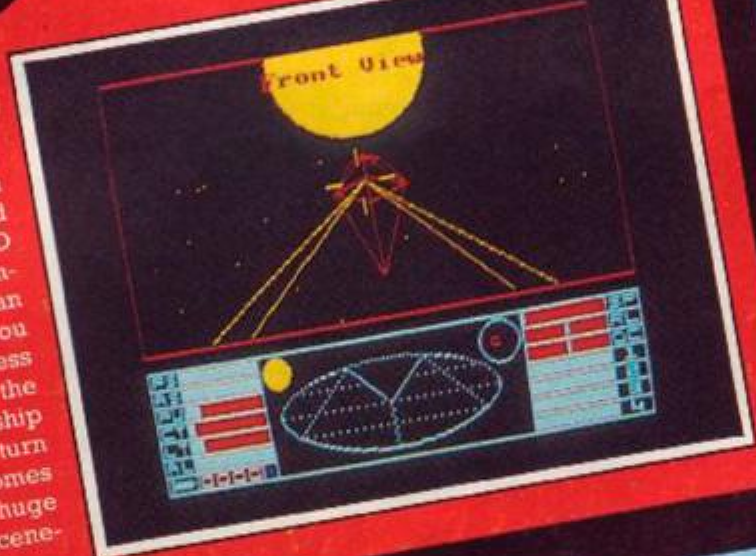
The trouble with this game is you can't stop playing it. Superb, fast-moving, solid 3D graphics, combined with a devilishly difficult task make it irresistibly addictive. The idea is to guide a special bomb along a highway littered with hazards and aliens. You shoot the aliens and move or avoid the hazards. The genius of it is that the task can only be completed by working how and where to shunt various objects blocking your path. You can turn them to your advantage! Vortex produced a winner.



FREE with a 12-month subscription!

ELITE (normally £14.95)

This is the space game to beat all space games. You trade in a vast, but detailed universe. And you take on the deadly foes arrayed against you in fast-moving 3D space combat. A winning combination. It's a game which can become part of your life, as you progress from being harmless and penniless to earning the money which can equip your ship with deadly weapons and turn you into one of the Elite. It comes superbly packaged with huge training manual and scene-setting novelette.



Only £8.25 for a six-month subscription to AA! AND you get superb free software!

DISK OWNERS' DELIGHT

Although the five Mastergames are being offered on cassette only, you can obtain a free disk program if you prefer by taking out a 12-month subscription and selecting one of the Amsoft titles listed below. Each would normally cost £13.95.

CYRUS II CHESS

Superb 3D display, and powerful play with many options. An AA Rave. THE chess program for the Amstrad micros.

SORCERY PLUS

The cassette version was brilliant and this goes far beyond it with more than 30 new locations. Explore a stunningly depicted magic world in a bid to rescue seven sorcerors. Many people's favourite game of 1985.

STRANGELOOP PLUS

From the same programmers as Sorcery Plus, this disk version again goes beyond the superb cassette-based original which by itself won a rave review in AA. A demanding arcade-adventure set in a robot factory.

3D GRAND PRIX

The best motor racing game on the Amstrad micros. You have a detailed driver's eye view including rear view mirrors to reveal the cars coming up behind. Fast, exciting action.

RAID

The controversial game from US Gold which has you pitted against the entire Soviet nuclear attack force. Four different stages of classy, shoot-em-up action.

SPECIAL SUBS OFFER ENTRY FORM

Name..

Address...

....

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Please underline ONE of the following statements (1-3), making sure you have circled the game or games of your choice.

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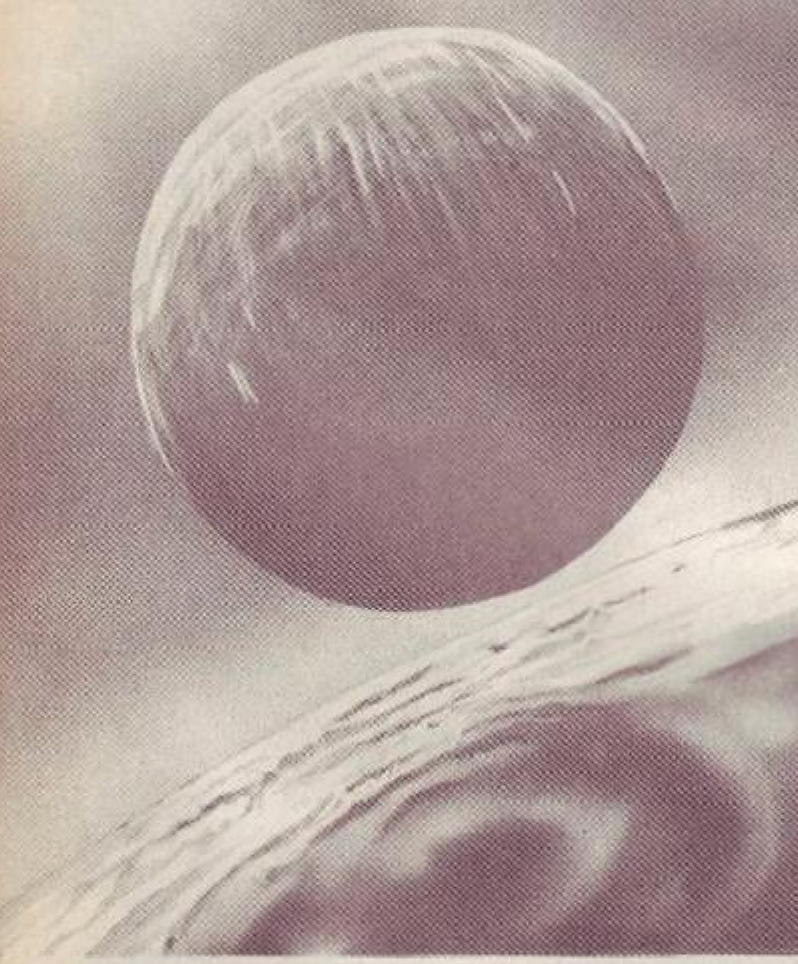
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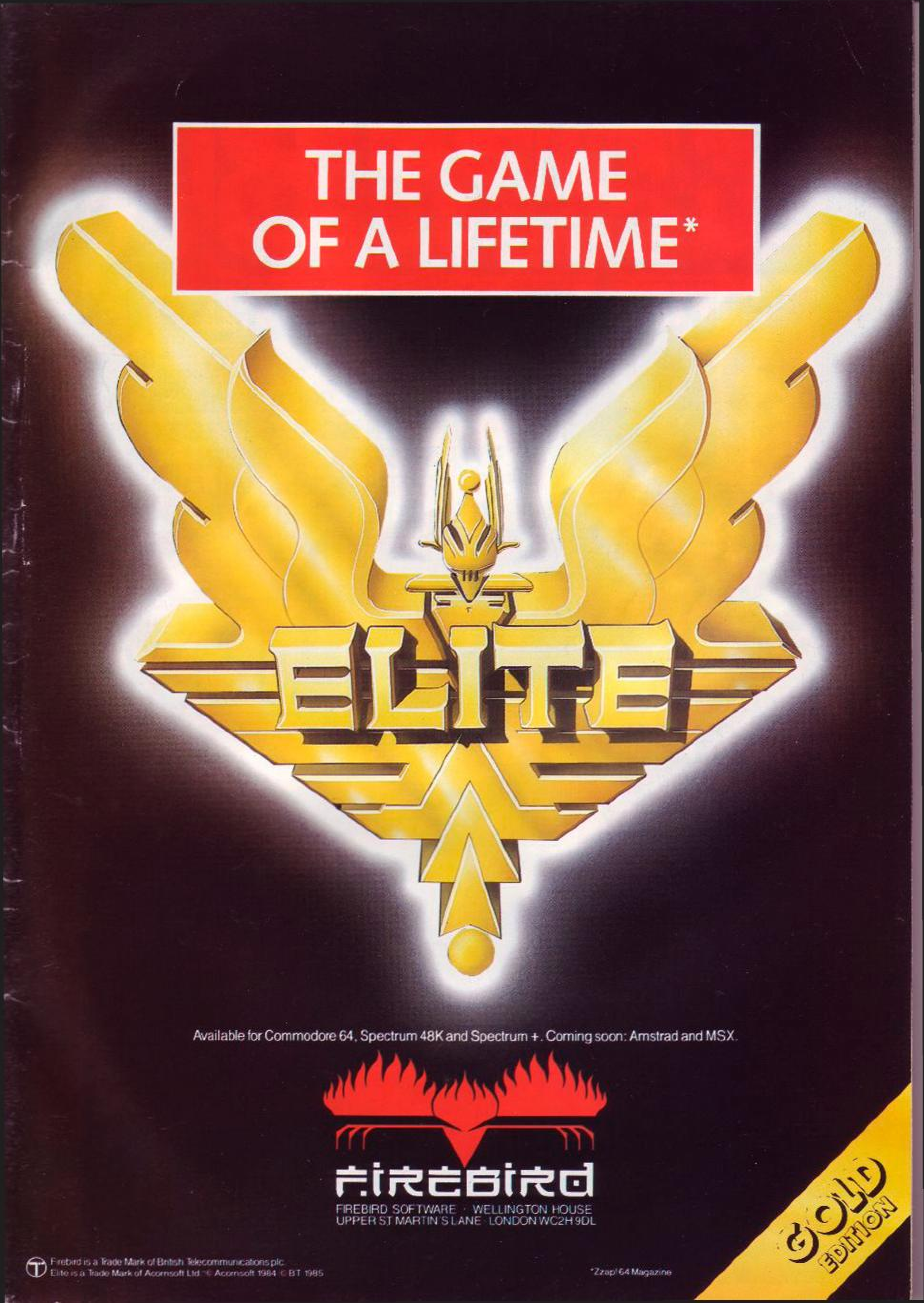
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